

ANNUAL REPORT

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ARQUS ANNUAL REPORT

2025-2026

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Dorothy Kelly

COORDINATOR OF THE ARQUS ALLIANCE

Dear Arqus Community,

Looking back on the academic year 2025–26, it is a great pleasure for me to reflect on a year in which the Arqus Alliance has continued to grow as a community and to deepen the cooperation between our universities. As we enter a new stage in the development of Arqus, we can see more clearly how the foundations built over recent years are becoming increasingly tangible through joint educational opportunities, shared strategies and new forms of collaboration across our institutions.

One of the defining moments of this year has been the adoption of the Arqus Mission Statement and Joint Long-term Strategy 2026–2035. Building on the experience gained since the foundation of the Alliance, this new strategy sets out our shared ambition to develop a forward-looking, open, integrated and research-driven European University, and to transform European higher education, research and innovation through deep cooperation and progressive integration. It provides a common framework for our work in the years ahead and reaffirms our commitment to building transformative excellence with and for all.

Education remains at the heart of this ambition. This year, we have further expanded our portfolio of Joint Master's Programmes, offering students an increasing range of opportunities to study across Arqus universities through jointly developed, student-centred and research-based curricula. The expansion of our joint programmes represents an important step towards a truly shared educational offer within the Alliance, strengthening the opportunities for students to benefit from our European dimension.

This academic year also marked the first time that Arqus micro-credentials were offered to learners. These flexible and targeted learning opportunities respond to social, personal, cultural and labour-market needs, while their collaborative design brings the European dimension of Arqus directly into the learning experience. Each Arqus micro-credential is jointly prepared and implemented by at least two universities of the Alliance, creating international and multicultural learning experiences for participants.
At the same time, the rapid development of Artificial Intelligence is presenting higher education with new opportunities as well as important questions and challenges. Across Arqus, workshops and learning activities have been organised to support our academic communities in exploring how AI can be used meaningfully and responsibly in different disciplines and educational contexts. These initiatives have provided spaces to exchange experiences,

develop practical approaches and consider how AI can enhance teaching and learning while keeping critical thinking, academic integrity and human judgement at the centre of the educational process.

Our commitment to our students and our wider community was also reflected in the first Arqus Talent Scholarship Fund Gathering Event, held in Granada in March. Bringing together scholarship beneficiaries from across the Alliance, the event provided an opportunity for students to meet, exchange experiences and strengthen their sense of belonging to the Arqus community.
In July, Maynooth University hosted the Arqus Annual Conference, providing another opportunity for members of our community to come together, exchange experiences and reflect on the future of our cooperation.

This year has also brought further opportunities to develop our work through securing funding for major new European projects and initiatives. The selection by the European Commission of Arqus Bridge will directly strengthen our long-term institutional transformation, while projects such as EDLive (European Degree Label: Live Vision & Action) and EAS-EL (European AI Sandbox for Entrepreneurial Learning) will allow us to pioneer innovative solutions in joint degree delivery and AI-driven education. The continued support and confidence of the European Union in Arqus and in the capacity of our universities to work together is an important recognition of the progress we have made. It also gives us the opportunity to take our cooperation further, to experiment with new forms of joint action and to contribute to the wider transformation of European higher education.

Beyond individual programmes and projects, what I value most about this academic year is the growing depth of our collaboration. Across education, research and innovation and societal engagement, colleagues and students from our universities are increasingly working together, sharing expertise and creating opportunities that would not exist without the Alliance.

As we look towards the years ahead, our task is to build on this momentum. The new Mission Statement and Joint Long-term Strategy give us a clear shared direction, while the experience of our communities gives us the knowledge and confidence to continue developing Arqus as a deeply connected European University Alliance.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all members of our university leadership, as well as to our students, academics, professional staff and partners, for their commitment, enthusiasm and continued support. Every programme, project, meeting and exchange contributes to the European university we are building together.

Together, we will continue to bring down the barriers to cooperation, create new opportunities for our communities and work towards a more equitable and sustainable future for European higher education.

Dorothy Kelly,

Coordinator of the Arqus European University Alliance



01 | THE ALLIANCE



9	350,000	28,000+	20,000
Universities	Students	Academics	Technical Staff

Vision:

In a global 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 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.

Mission:

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Open Science; shared academic staff, joint research projects.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT

PhD, Joint Mentoring, Post-docs, International Talent Scholarships.

SOCIETAL ENGAGEMENT

Knowledge transfer, work-integrated learning, entrepreneurship.

EDUCATION

BA & MA study programmes; microcredentials; learning mobility; lifelong learning.

Major Goals:

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.

Members:

Full partners

- University of Granada
- University of Graz
- Leipzig University
- University of Lyon 1
- Maynooth University
- University of Minho
- University of Padua
- Vilnius University
- University of Wrocław

Associate universities

- Durham University
- National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy



UNIVERSIDAD DE GRANADA

UNI GRAZ

UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG

Lyon 1 Université Claude Bernard

Maynooth University National University of Ireland Maynooth

University of Minho uminho.pt

UNIVERSITÀ DI PADOVA

Vilniaus universitetas

Uniwersytet Wrocławski

Durham University

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF KYIV-MOHYLA ACADEMY

Associate partners

- Auvergne- Rhône-Alpes's Regional Council
- Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Navigation of Granada
- City of Graz
- Coimbra Group
- Delegation of Austria's National Students Council in the University of Graz
- Erasmus Student Network Granada
- Erasmus Student Network International
- Erasmus Student Network Lyon
- Erasmus Student Network Minho
- Erasmus Student Network Padua
- Granada City Hall
- Granada's Provincial Council
- Leipzig University's Student Council
- Minho Business Association
- Municipality of Braga
- Municipality of Guimarães
- Municipality of Padua
- Marshal's Office of Lower Silesian Voivodeship
- Students' Union of the University of Minho
- The House of Europe Lyon-Rhône-Alpes
- Utrecht Network
- Vilnius Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts
- Vilnius City Council

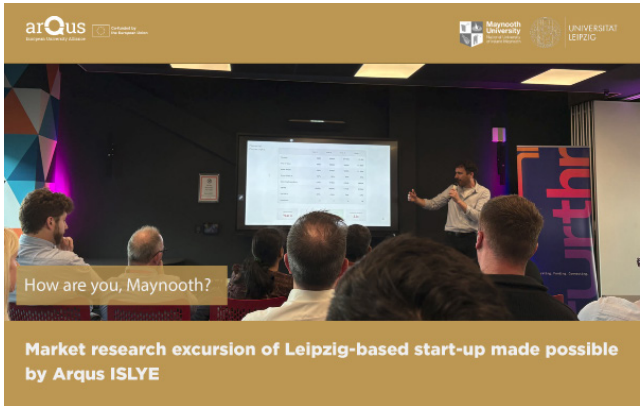




02 | A year of *experiences*



October 2025



Market research excursion of Leipzig-based start-up made possible by Arqus ISLYE

RHIZOME EXPLORED THE IRISH ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM THROUGH AN ISLYE MOBILITY

From 20 to 27 September, the co-founders of Rhizome, a start-up from Leipzig University, visited Maynooth University within the framework of the Arqus ISLYE programme. During their mobility, they explored the Irish entrepreneurial ecosystem and gained insights into the local business and research landscape. They met with representatives from the Innovation Value Institute, the All-Island Research Observatory and People&Place, discussing topics including innovation, entrepreneurship and organisational decision-making.

They also visited the County Kildare Chamber, where they learned more about the challenges faced by local SMEs. The mobility included meetings with members of the Irish start-up community, such as the co-founder and CEO of Wrky, and participation in Furthr's monthly Pitch Jam at the Guinness Enterprise Centre. These activities allowed the Rhizome team to test assumptions about the international potential of their digital decision-making platform, while making new connections and gaining a better understanding of the Irish market.



EDU-CLIMA LAUNCHED A WEBINAR SERIES ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

In October, the Arqus bottom-up initiative EDU-CLIMA launched a webinar series on climate change and sustainability, bringing together speakers from six Arqus universities and the University of Minnesota. The initiative, coordinated by the University of Graz and funded by the Arqus Innovation Fund, aimed to promote cross-disciplinary approaches to climate action education. The series featured seven webinars exploring different perspectives on climate change and sustainability, ranging from climate literacy and digital eco-storytelling to ecoliteracy, waste and culture, and the integration of research into education.

Speakers from the universities of Graz, Minho, Wrocław, Leipzig, Granada and Padua, together with a guest speaker from the University of Minnesota, shared their expertise with an international audience. The webinars, held online between November 2025 and June 2026,

provided opportunities for participants to exchange ideas and approaches to climate education across disciplines and university contexts.

ARC TECHNICA WON THE ARQUS INTERNATIONAL INNOVATORS AWARD 2025

On 24 October, the team ARC Technica from the University of Minho won the Arqus International Innovators Award 2025, after receiving more than 1,100 votes. The winning project presented a robotic digital workshop that locally produces prefabricated, sustainable and customisable wooden structures, aiming to make construction more accessible and scalable. As winners of the Award, Francisca Aroso, Rui Reis and Rodrigo Chiesse received the opportunity to participate in the Start Cup Padova Final in Padua.

The 2025 edition brought together six finalist projects from across the Arqus Alliance: Balu from the University of Graz, HYBEAM from Leipzig University, Belt4B@Bies from the University of Granada, Purifas from the University of Padua and Rizz Up! from Vilnius University, alongside ARC Technica. The competition provided the participating start-ups with an opportunity to present their business models in an international context and foster visibility and networking across the Alliance.



November 2025



ARQUS CO-LEADS AND INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATORS MET IN SAN SERVOLO

On 20 and 21 November, Arqus Vice-Rectors, Working Group co-leads and institutional coordinators met at the Venice International University on San Servolo Island, hosted by the University of Padua. The two-day working event included a plenary session with updates from the Coordination Team and discussions on developments at European level, as well as presentations on the progress of the Alliance's working groups in areas such as digital tools, dissemination, communities of practice and plurilingual initiatives.

Participants also held parallel meetings and open discussions to strengthen coordination across work packages. On the second day, the Education, Research & Innovation and Societal Engagement Boards, together with the transversal teams, reviewed achievements and current challenges and planned their next steps. The meeting provided an opportunity to reinforce collaboration across the Alliance and set priorities for the coming months.



WHEN SCIENCE MET ADVENTURE AT THE GRANADA GEOPARK

In February, 19 students from the Universities of Granada, Padua and Leipzig participated in the first Arqus Winter School at the Granada Geopark. Organised within the framework of the Arqus Innovation Fund, the week-long programme combined lectures, practical sessions and fieldwork on erosion, geophysics, archaeology and remote sensing. Students explored different sites across the Geopark, including the Desierto de Gorafe, the travertine formations of Alicún de las Torres and the Baza Fault, and applied geophysical techniques such as electrical resistivity tomography, ground-penetrating radar, geomagnetic surveying and drone-based mapping.

Led by an international team of lecturers, the activities fostered interdisciplinary collaboration and provided students with an opportunity to exchange knowledge and perspectives while working in the field. Beyond the academic programme, the Winter School also encouraged the participants to connect across universities and

cultures, creating new friendships and an international community. The experience marked the first edition of what the organisers hoped would become a regular Arqus activity.

”REFUGEE GIRLS” CONCLUDED ITS TOUR AT LEIPZIG UNIVERSITY

On 2 December, Leipzig University hosted the final screening of the documentary film “Refugee Girls”, concluding a tour across all nine Arqus partner universities. The tour was organised and accompanied by Elisa Gamba, PhD candidate in Human Rights, Society and Multi-level Governance at the University of Padua, as part of the Arqus Inclusion and Diversity Hub. Following the screening, a discussion brought together the film’s director, Leonardo Cinieri Lombroso, who joined digitally, Cezar Hesso, a former refugee student at Leipzig University, the student initiative mitStudieren and members of the audience.

The conversation addressed different experiences of displacement and integration, including the challenges faced by refugee students and differences in their treatment depending on their countries of origin. The event was part of the bottom-up initiative “Arqus: an Alliance supporting refugees’ right to a qualified and unique study experience”, funded by the Arqus Innovation Fund, which aimed to foster reflection and dialogue on the inclusion of refugee students across the Alliance.



December 2025



EXNURB COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE ORGANISED A WORKSHOP ON VISUAL RESEARCH METHODS

In December, the ExNUrb Community of Practice organised an online workshop on visual research methods, bringing together Arqus community members interested in urban studies and visual approaches to research. Maciej Frąckowiak and Łukasz Rogowski from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and Brian Conway from Maynooth University shared their experience of using visual methods in research.

The session introduced the workshop "Images in Transformation: Visual Techniques in Research on the Experience of Spatial Change", which was scheduled to take place in Wrocław in May 2026. The initiative offered participants an opportunity to learn more about the use of visual techniques to explore spatial change and to exchange experiences across the Arqus community. It also contributed to strengthening the ExNUrb Community of Practice as a space for collaboration among researchers and other members of the Alliance interested in urban studies.



THE UNIVERSITY OF LYON 1 CLAUDE BERNARD TOOK PART IN THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE GT-UEFR

In December, The University of Lyon 1 Claude Bernard took part in the annual meeting of the French University European Reference Group (GT-UEFR), bringing together representatives from French universities involved in the European Universities initiative. The meeting provided an opportunity to exchange experiences on the development of European university alliances and discuss common challenges and opportunities for cooperation. The University of Lyon 1 Claude Bernard shared its experience within the Arqus Alliance and contributed to discussions on the role of alliances in strengthening European cooperation in higher education.

The encounter also offered a space for participants to reflect on the development of the European Universities initiative and on the opportunities for French higher education institutions to work together at European level. The University of Lyon 1 Claude Bernard's participation contributed to strengthening connections with other

French universities and to exchanging practices and perspectives on the future of European university cooperation.

RESULTS OF THE THIRD ARQUS JOINT CALL FOR BLENDED INTENSIVE PROGRAMMES WERE PUBLISHED

In December, Arqus published the results of its third joint call for Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs), designed to foster long-term collaborative teaching and learning activities across the Alliance. Eight projects were selected for funding, covering topics ranging from theatre and historical memory in Europe to microbiology, EU-LAC relations, Universal Design for Learning and European identity.

The selected projects involved all Arqus universities, with each institution participating in at least one BIP during the second half of the 2025–2026 academic year. The call highlighted the growing interest of academic staff in developing joint educational activities and strengthening subject-specific collaboration across the Alliance. The involvement of institutions from outside Arqus also contributed to broadening the scope of these initiatives and strengthening collaborative links with other partners.



January 2026



ARQUS THINKATHON EXPLORED THE SKILLS STUDENTS NEED IN A CHANGING WORLD

The Arqus Thinkathon “What skills do students need in a fast-changing world?” brought students and professionals together to discuss future career prospects and the skills needed to navigate an evolving labour market. Hosted by the Global and European Studies Institute at Leipzig University, the event brought together students from the social sciences and humanities with experts from academia, politics and international organisations.
Following a keynote by Jakob Wöllenstein from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, a roundtable discussion brought together representatives from the City of Leipzig, the German Embassy in Sarajevo, the German Academic Exchange Service, the European Commission and Europa-Haus Leipzig. Participants discussed the importance of strategic thinking, communication, networking and intercultural skills, as well as interdisciplinary approaches to global challenges. Six World Cafés then provided an opportunity to explore career paths in academia, business, media, civil society, international organisations and European Union structures.



P.A.G.E.S. CREATED A SPACE FOR CROSS-CULTURAL DIALOGUE IN WROCŁAW

In January, students from diverse cultural backgrounds came together in Wrocław for a P.A.G.E.S. session, an Arqus student co-designed project exploring new ways of fostering cross-cultural dialogue. Hosted at the independent art space Tęczowa, the two-day activity used visual narratives, picture books, collage and blackout poetry to encourage participants to explore complex experiences and create new stories together. Students, including Ukrainian and Belarusian participants, reflected on conflict, identity and cultural differences through creative activities rather than traditional academic discussion.

The group also visited the Tajne Komplety bookstore, a cultural space in the centre of Wrocław with a long tradition of promoting independent thought and dialogue. The programme concluded with a Silent Gallery Walk, where participants displayed their collages and exchanged feedback without relying on spoken language. The experience demonstrated how visual expression could help overcome language barriers and create a shared space for dialogue and mutual understanding.

THE FIRST ARQUS JOINT MASTER'S PROGRAMME IN EUROPEAN STUDIES CELEBRATED ITS FIRST GRADUATES

On 29 January, the University of Graz hosted the first graduation ceremony of the Arqus Joint Master's Programme in European Studies, bringing together students, graduates and representatives from the four partner universities: Granada, Graz, Leipzig and Vilnius. Around 40 students from the three generations of the programme, including the 21 first graduates, attended the ceremony alongside representatives of the partner universities and other guests.

The event featured welcome addresses from representatives of the four universities and a keynote by Arqus Coordinator Dorothy Kelly, who reflected on the journey from the initial idea for a joint programme to its implementation. The four academic coordinators also shared their congratulations with the graduates, who expressed their gratitude before receiving their diplomas. The ceremony marked an important milestone for the Alliance's first joint degree programme, which had welcomed its first students in the 2023/24 academic year following its successful accreditation under the European Approach.



February 2026



THE ARQUES RECTOR'S COUNCIL GATHERED IN GRANADA FOR A KEY STRATEGIC MEETING

On 13 February, the University of Granada hosted the 18th meeting of the Arqus Rectors' Council, bringing together the Rectors of the Arqus universities to discuss key strategic issues for the future of the Alliance. The meeting resulted in the approval of the Arqus Mission Statement and Joint Long-term Strategy 2026-2035, which will guide the Alliance's development over the coming decade. The Rectors also signed consortium agreements for two new joint programmes: the Arqus Joint Master's Programme in Translation, Technologies and Artificial Intelligence and the Arqus Joint Bachelor's Programme in Physics for Technology.

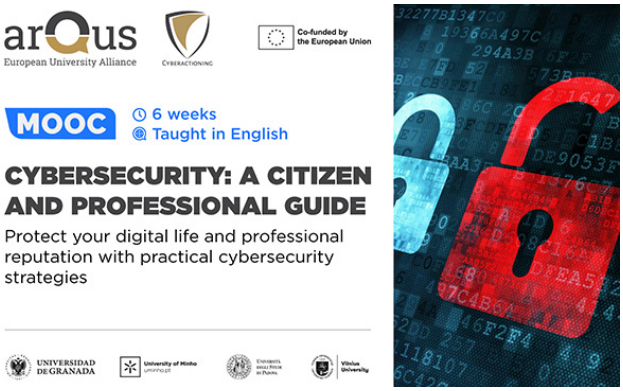
Another key decision was the ratification of the proposal to appoint Guadalupe Soriano Barabino, Institutional Coordinator at the University of Granada, as the next Arqus Coordinator from October 2026. The meeting also addressed the future legal entity of the Alliance and upcoming activities, including the 2026 Arqus Annual Conference. Beyond the formal sessions, participants visited the historical library of the University of Granada and explored the city's cultural heritage.



ECOUNITY DAY BROUGHT SUSTAINABLE FASHION AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT TO GRANADA

On 9 February, students and members of the local community gathered in Granada for EcoUnity Day, a student co-designed project supported by Arqus. Organised by sustainability-driven students from the University of Granada, with the collaboration of the Spanish Red Cross and several university departments, the workshop focused on upcycling as a practical approach to sustainability. Participants learned basic sewing techniques and how to use a sewing machine to transform existing garments into renewed and functional pieces.

The activity also provided space to discuss the environmental impact of fast and ultra-fast fashion, pollution in the fashion industry and the durability of the clothes we consume. Beyond the practical session, EcoUnity Day brought together people from diverse academic and cultural backgrounds, encouraging the exchange of ideas and experiences around more sustainable lifestyles. The initiative demonstrated how student-led projects could combine sustainability, creativity and community engagement while promoting everyday actions with a positive environmental impact.



ARQUS LAUNCHED A MOOC ON CYBERSECURITY FOR CITIZENS AND PROFESSIONALS

In February, Arqus launched the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) “Cybersecurity: A citizen and professional guide”, offering free online training in digital security to learners worldwide. Developed within the framework of the Cyberactioning Project and coordinated by the University of Granada, the six-week course was designed to make cybersecurity knowledge accessible to both citizens and professionals beyond specialist ICT fields.

The programme covered topics including data protection, risk management, encryption, digital identities, social engineering, privacy, cyberintelligence and digital forensics. Academics from the Universities of Granada, Padua, Vilnius and Minho, together with experts from industry and research institutions, contributed to the course content. Through videos, interactive quizzes and practical activities, participants explored common digital threats and strategies to protect personal and professional environments. The initiative contributed to Arqus’ efforts to strengthen digital skills and promote inclusive access to high-quality learning opportunities across Europe.

March 2026



THE ARQUS LOUNGE RETURNED TO CONNECT COLLEAGUES ACROSS THE ALLIANCE

In March, the Arqus Lounge returned with a new series of informal online sessions for academic and professional staff from across the Alliance. Following the successful first edition in 2025, the initiative offered participants an opportunity to meet colleagues from other Arqus universities, practise English and exchange views on topics related to their daily work and common interests. The sessions, held twice a month from March to June, combined general conversation in smaller groups with focused discussions on different topics.

Led by moderators with native-level English, the meetings provided a relaxed environment for participants to improve their language skills while developing a better understanding of different institutional and cultural contexts. The Arqus Lounge also contributed to strengthening informal connections across the Alliance, allowing colleagues to discover shared interests and establish new contacts beyond their usual professional networks.



A NEW MISSION STATEMENT AND JOINT LONG-TERM STRATEGY

In March, Arqus adopted a renewed Mission Statement and Joint Long-term Strategy for 2026–2035, setting out a shared vision, mission, values and priorities for the Alliance's development over the next decade. Approved by the Arqus Rectors' Council in February, the new strategic framework built on the Alliance's experience since its creation in 2018 and the contributions of the universities that joined Arqus from 2021 onwards. It reaffirmed Arqus' commitment to deeper cooperation and progressive

integration across education, research, innovation, culture, societal engagement and global outreach.

The strategy also placed democratic resilience at the centre of the Alliance's work, in response to challenges including geopolitical instability, climate change, global health risks and digital transformation. With this new framework, Arqus reinforced its long-term commitment to working together to contribute to a more equitable, sustainable and resilient Europe and to strengthening the role of universities in addressing shared societal challenges.

THE OPEN SCIENCE AMBASSADOR NETWORK MET IN MAYNOOTH

On 23 and 24 March, members of the Arqus Open Science Ambassador Network Community of Practice met at Maynooth University for two workshop days funded by the Arqus Innovation Fund. Participants from across the Alliance exchanged experiences and discussed key issues related to Open Science, including research data and software preservation, open licences, reproducibility and institutional policies.

The meeting also provided an opportunity to define the next steps for the Community of Practice, including the organisation of webinars, the sharing of resources and the continuation of the Arqus Open Science Award with a second edition. A public event was also held in Maynooth, featuring presentations by ambassadors from the Universities of Granada and Padua and a contribution from Maynooth University on reproducibility in research. The workshop strengthened collaboration among Open Science ambassadors and helped identify common challenges and areas for further development across the Alliance.



April 2026



THE ARQUS STUDENT COUNCIL MET AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LYON 1 CLAUDE BERNARD

On 10 and 11 April, the Arqus Student Council gathered at The University of Lyon 1 Claude Bernard for a two-day meeting bringing together seven student representatives from Graz, Leipzig, Granada, Lyon 1 and Maynooth. The programme combined exchanges with university departments and local student representatives with discussions on inclusion, student support and campus life. Participants shared practices from their universities and addressed common challenges, including accessibility, support for student parents and the need for spaces adapted to diverse student needs. The meeting also included a visit to the La Doua campus and exchanges with local student associations. During the Student Council meeting, representatives discussed the development of a Welcome Guide for new members, upcoming activities, internal governance and the Council's long-term role within Arqus. They also reviewed ongoing projects and explored new initiatives to improve communication and collaboration between students across the Alliance.

HUMAN RIGHTS BROUGHT GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCES TO LEIPZIG

On 10 April, Leipzig University hosted the latest edition of the Human Rights Café, a student-led dialogue series taking place across the Arqus Alliance. Organised by students, the session provided a space for peer-to-peer discussion on human rights, with participants drawing on their personal experiences of living and working in Germany as foreign nationals.

The conversation explored human rights conditions across different European countries as well as in China and Japan, bringing together diverse perspectives on common challenges. A particular focus was placed on



the importance of human rights education, especially in rural and politically polarised communities, and on the need to foster dialogue across ideological differences. The event was part of a wider series taking place at Arqus universities, creating opportunities for students to engage critically with human rights issues and develop greater awareness of different social and cultural contexts.

A PHD EXCHANGE SPARKED A LONG-TERM RESEARCH COLLABORATION

A research stay between The University of Lyon 1 Claude Bernard and the University of Padua grew into a long-term collaboration connecting researchers across the Arqus Alliance. The story began when Sabrina Grenda, then a PhD student at Lyon 1, travelled to Padua to use specialised Electron Paramagnetic Resonance techniques for her doctoral research on the magnetic properties of molecular materials. Working with Professor Antonio Barbon's team led to the development of new pulse EPR methodologies and a publication in the Journal of the American Chemical Society.

The mobility also marked Sabrina's first research experience abroad and contributed to her subsequent international career. The collaboration between Professors Dominique Luneau and Antonio Barbon continued beyond the initial exchange, expanding in 2023 to researchers from Granada, Graz and Leipzig and leading to the creation of the Arqus Metal-Organic Network. In June 2025, the collaboration also resulted in a Blended Intensive Programme on advanced sustainable metal-organic materials, bringing PhD students from across the Alliance together in Lyon.



May 2026



ARQUS LAUNCHED THE TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD WEBINAR SERIES

In May, Arqus launched a new webinar series showcasing innovative approaches to teaching and learning in higher education. The Teaching Excellence Award Webinar Series brought together teaching staff, educational support professionals and didactic experts from across the Alliance, featuring recipients of the Arqus Teaching Excellence Award from different editions between 2021 and 2026. Each session offered two award winners the opportunity to present their teaching projects, share methodologies and good practices and discuss their experiences with participants through interactive sessions. The series covered a wide range of disciplines, pedagogical approaches and educational objectives, reflecting the diversity of teaching practices across Arqus universities. The initiative aimed to provide practical and transferable ideas to enrich teaching, learning and assessment practices in different academic contexts, while creating opportunities for teachers to exchange experiences and learn from colleagues across the Alliance. The first two sessions took place in June, featuring award winners from the Universities of Graz, Minho, Maynooth and Padua.



THE UNIVERSITIES OF GRANADA AND PADUA FOSTERED JOINT TRAINING IN BASIC LIFE SUPPORT

On 30 April, the Universities of Granada and Padua carried out a joint academic innovation activity in Basic Life Support (BLS), bringing together second-year Medicine students from both universities in a practical session conducted simultaneously at their respective faculties.

Connected in real time, the students took part in clinical simulations and exchanged knowledge while developing practical skills in basic life support. The activity provided a shared teaching environment in which students could compare different approaches and working methods and reflect on their experiences during the debriefing sessions following each simulation.

Teaching staff from several departments of the two Faculties of Medicine supported the initiative, which formed part of the teaching innovation actions promoted by the Arqus Alliance. The experience allowed the two universities to share good practices and explore new models of medical education, while giving students the opportunity to complement theoretical learning with practical training in an international and collaborative setting.

ARQUS UGR BROUGHT ALLIANCE OPPORTUNITIES CLOSER TO STUDENTS

During the semester, the Arqus UGR team visited 16 faculties and centres of the University of Granada to bring students closer to the opportunities offered by the Arqus Alliance. Information sessions and stands introduced students to international mobility, courses, intercultural activities, student engagement opportunities and other Arqus initiatives. More than 500 students and members of the university community visited the information desks throughout the semester, providing an opportunity to ask questions and learn more about how to get involved in the Alliance.

The visits reached students from a wide range of academic fields, including Dentistry, Computer and Telecommunication Engineering, Economics and Business, Medicine, Translation and Interpreting, Health Sciences, Architecture, Pharmacy, Science, Psychology, Education, Fine Arts and Political Science and Sociology. The initiative strengthened direct communication with students and encouraged greater participation in the international and collaborative activities promoted by Arqus.



June 2026





ARQUS LAUNCHED A NEW INNOVATION FUND SECTION ON ITS WEBSITE

In May, Arqus launched a new dedicated section on its website presenting the Arqus Innovation Fund and its opportunities for the Alliance community. The new section brought together information on the Fund's different calls and initiatives, making it easier for members of the Arqus universities to discover funding opportunities and learn how to participate.

It also showcased projects and activities supported through the Fund, highlighting the diversity of initiatives developed across the Alliance in areas such as education, research, innovation, inclusion and societal engagement. The new section provided a central space to follow the development of these initiatives and discover examples of collaboration between Arqus universities. By making information on the Innovation Fund more accessible, the website update contributed to increasing the visibility of the opportunities available to the Arqus community and encouraging the development of new bottom-up initiatives across the Alliance.

RESULTS OF THE THIRD ARQUS TWINNING 2.0 CALL WERE PUBLISHED

In June, Arqus published the results of its third call for Twinning 2.0 projects, selecting initiatives to be carried out from the 2026/2027 academic year onwards. The call aimed to strengthen subject-related collaboration between staff and students through reciprocal short-term mobility activities, with students from two Arqus universities visiting each other's institutions to carry out a common programme. The selected projects cover a range of academic fields and encourage collaboration around the Alliance's main themes, including European identity and heritage, digital transformation and artificial intelligence, and climate change and environmental sustainability.

Twinning activities can take different forms, including

group trips, joint workshops, summer schools, international competitions and conferences, combining physical mobility with blended learning where appropriate. The third call continued the development of Twinning 2.0 as a flexible scheme for fostering joint learning and teaching activities and creating new opportunities for students and staff to collaborate across the Arqus Alliance.

ARQUS STUDENTS EXPLORED EUROPE'S CONTESTED PASTS IN VILNIUS

From 1 to 4 June, 30 students and doctoral researchers from six Arqus universities took part in the Spring School "Dissonant Heritage, Contested Landscapes and European Identity" at Vilnius University. Organised by the European Identity & Heritage Living Lab, the programme brought together students from Leipzig, Maynooth, Minho, Padua, Vilnius and Wrocław, representing disciplines including art history, cultural studies, political science and urban and mobility research.

Through lectures, discussions and fieldwork, participants explored how contested histories and political regimes had shaped European landscapes and influenced contemporary understandings of heritage and identity. The programme included visits to Vilnius' socialist housing district of Lazdynai, the former Vilnius Ghetto and the Lost Stetl Museum in Šeduva, allowing students to connect academic perspectives with places marked by complex and traumatic histories. The Spring School provided an opportunity to exchange perspectives across countries and disciplines and to reflect on European identity as an ongoing dialogue shaped by different historical experiences.



July & August 2026



EDLIVE PROJECT WAS SELECTED FOR FUNDING TO ADVANCE THE JOINT EUROPEAN DEGREE LABEL

The EDLive project "The European Degree Label Live: From Vision to Action" was selected for funding under the Erasmus+ Partnerships for Excellence: European Degree exploratory action. Led by the University of Graz, the 36-month project will support the implementation of the Joint European Degree Label (jEDL) and contribute to the development of high-quality joint programmes across Europe. Building on Arqus' extensive experience in joint programme design and transnational cooperation, EDLive will develop practical strategies and tools to help universities align existing and new joint programmes with common European standards. The project will also address areas such as joint governance, quality assurance, student support, mobility and inclusiveness. With an Erasmus+ contribution of almost €1 million, EDLive will provide Arqus and its partners with an opportunity to contribute directly to the implementation of the European Degree framework and to strengthen cooperation on joint education across the Alliance.



ARQUS RECOGNISED EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING, OPEN SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

From 2 to 4 July, 45 teachers from all Arqus universities In July, Arqus celebrated the winners of the 2026 Arqus Awards during the Arqus Annual Conference in Maynooth. The Teaching Excellence Awards recognised Paulo Flores from the University of Minho for his "Race Party Challenge" course, and Marina García Carmona and Pedro Jesús Ruiz Montero from the University of Granada for their service-learning initiative on diversity, inclusive education and social justice.

The Open Science Awards recognised three early-career researchers from the Universities of Padua and Graz for their contributions to music preservation, open-source software and research data, while four researchers from Graz, Padua and Lyon 1 received honourable mentions. The Arqus International Innovators Award went to Elite Education Academy from Vilnius University, selected through a public vote for its personalised matching solu-

tion connecting students and teachers. The awards highlighted the diversity of talent and collaborative initiatives developed across the Arqus community.

THE FIRST MICAC COHORT CELEBRATED ITS GRADUATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINHO

On 10 July, the University of Minho hosted the first graduation ceremony of the Arqus Joint Master's Programme in International Cybersecurity and Cyberintelligence (MICAC), marking a milestone for the programme and its four partner universities: Granada, Padua, Vilnius and Minho. The ceremony concluded the first MICAC Graduation Week, during which students completed their final academic requirements, including an Attack & Defence Exercise and the public defence of their Master's dissertations.

Graduates, families, academic staff and institutional representatives gathered to celebrate the achievements of the first cohort and reflect on two years of international mobility and interdisciplinary learning across four European universities. The programme included an open lecture on educating future cybersecurity professionals, as well as testimonials from graduates about their academic and personal experiences. Representatives of the partner universities also reflected on the value of European cooperation and the development of MICAC as a joint programme.





ARQUS BRIDGE WAS SELECTED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO SUPPORT THE ALLIANCE'S LONG-TERM TRANSFORMATION

The European Commission selected the Arqus Bridge project for funding for the 2026–2028 period, supporting the next stage in the development of the Arqus European University Alliance. Building on the renewed Arqus Mission Statement and Joint Long-term Strategy 2026–2035, the project aims to consolidate the Alliance's achievements and deepen its institutional integration.

Arqus Bridge will support the development of joint programmes and flexible European learning pathways, the expansion of joint research and innovation activities and new opportunities for students, researchers and staff across the Alliance. The project will also strengthen joint governance mechanisms, digital ecosystems, quality assurance processes and collaborative frameworks, while reinforcing Arqus' commitment to inclusion, multilingualism, sustainability and democratic participation. Its activities will be structured around the flagship initiative Arqus for Democracy and four Academic Hubs focusing on climate resilience, responsible artificial intelligence, Europe as a global actor and sustainable health.



THE 2026 ARQUS ANNUAL CONFERENCE BROUGHT THE ALLIANCE COMMUNITY TOGETHER IN MAYNOOTH

From 7 to 9 July, Maynooth University hosted the 2026 Arqus Annual Conference, bringing together students, academics, professional staff and external stakeholders from across the Alliance. Under the theme “Voices of Impact: Weaving Stories Across Europe”, the conference explored the impact of European university alliances at individual, institutional and societal levels. Discussions addressed topics including institutional transformation, joint programmes, student support, governance, scientific diplomacy and the role of universities in European policymaking.

The event also marked several important milestones for Arqus, including the approval of Arqus Bridge funding, the ratification of the decision to establish an Arqus Legal Entity and the selection of the EAS-EL project for funding. Students contributed to the programme through the Student Ambassadors’ workshop on inclusive mobility, while the Arqus Awards recognised achievements across teaching, Open Science and innovation. The conference also featured a performance of Vivaldi’s Gloria by the Arqus Joint Choir and Maynooth University Orchestra, bringing together singers from six Arqus universities.



EAS-EL WAS SELECTED FOR FUNDING TO STRENGTHEN AI-DRIVEN INNOVATION ACROSS ARQUS

In July, the EAS-EL project "European AI Sandbox for Entrepreneurial Learning" was selected for funding under the EIT Higher Education Initiative 2025. Led by the University of Graz, the 24-month project was awarded up to €1,998,995 and will begin in September 2026. EAS-EL will create a shared European AI Sandbox where students, researchers and staff from across the Arqus Alliance can develop, test and transform AI-based ideas into innovative solutions and entrepreneurial ventures.

The project brings together six Arqus universities, with the University of Minho, the University of Padua and the University of Lyon 1 participating as associated partners, alongside an innovation and start-up hub and an industry partner. A key objective will be to make AI innovation accessible across disciplines, including the humanities, social sciences, law and business, while promoting responsible and human-centred approaches to artificial intelligence. The project will also establish structures designed to support AI entrepreneurship across the Alliance beyond its two-year implementation period.

ARQUS CELEBRATED THE WINNERS OF THE TELL YOUR (GREEN) MOBILITY STORY CONTEST



Arqus announced the winners of the 2026 Tell Your (Green) Mobility Story contest, organised by the Arqus on the Move team to highlight students' international mobility experiences and sustainable travel practices. Students submitted short videos of up to 90 seconds, which were published on the Arqus YouTube channel and opened to public voting. In the Green Mobility category, Emma Cassara, Nicola Castelletti, Arume Aparicio and Kristina Buchelova were recognised for sharing their sustainable approaches to travelling and living abroad.

The winners received Interrail Passes to continue exploring Europe by sustainable means. The contest also featured a Mobility Stories category, where students reflected on their experiences of studying abroad, cultural exchange and building new connections. The initiative attracted more than 2,000 votes across both categories and provided students with an opportunity to share their experiences with the wider Arqus community, while highlighting the role of sustainable mobility in international exchange.

THE ALLIANCE CELEBRATED THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF ITS FIRST JOINT MICRO-CREDENTIAL

In July, Arqus celebrated the successful completion of its first jointly developed and delivered micro-credential, “Advanced Creative Thinking and Communication”. Developed by Vilnius University, Maynooth University, the University of Minho and the University of Graz, together with the external partner Kaospilot in Denmark, the programme brought together 59 participants from 18 countries. The blended learning experience combined an online introductory session, three intensive in-person days at Kaospilot in Aarhus and a three-week virtual creative challenge, followed by a final online reflection session.

Participants explored practical methods for generating original ideas and communicating them effectively to different audiences, while also examining how AI chatbots could support creative thinking and learning processes. The programme offered a multicultural learning environment, bringing together students from Arqus universities and lifelong learners from different academic and professional backgrounds. Following the successful first edition, Arqus planned to offer the micro-credential again in the 2026–2027 academic year.



September 2026



ARQUS STRENGTHENED ITS PRESENCE AT EAIE 2026 IN GLASGOW

More than 30 representatives from Arqus universities took part in the 36th Annual Conference and Exhibition of the European Association for International Education (EAIE) in Glasgow from 8 to 11 September 2026. The conference provided an opportunity to strengthen existing partnerships, meet international stakeholders and explore new opportunities for cooperation. Arqus also contributed to the programme by sharing experiences and initiatives developed across the Alliance. Ninon Böhme from Leipzig University presented a poster on green mobility and sustainable travel, highlighting Arqus' work to promote more environmentally friendly mobility options. Samira Bonucci from the University of Padua also participated in a workshop on joint programmes from a global perspective, sharing examples and lessons learned from developing programmes with international partners. Throughout the conference, the Arqus delegation used the event as a platform to increase the Alliance's visibility, exchange practices with higher education professionals from across Europe and beyond and strengthen its international partnerships.



THE ARQUS PLURILINGUAL MODULE OFFERED STUDENTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCOVER LITHUANIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

In September, Arqus opened a new edition of its Plurilingual Module, inviting exchange students studying at Vilnius University to learn Lithuanian while exploring multilingualism, language-learning strategies and everyday life in Lithuania. The free 5 ECTS online course combined beginner-level Lithuanian classes with theoretical content on language and culture, as well as opportunities for informal language practice through Arqus Language Cafés.

Delivered through Microsoft Teams, the module was designed to allow students to combine their participation with their regular studies and included both scheduled activities and independent learning and reflection. Participants developed A1–level Lithuanian skills while reflecting on how languages are learned and used in different cultural contexts. Organised by the Arqus Plurilingual and Intercultural Hub, the initiative contributed to promoting language learning, multilingualism and intercultural exchange across the Alliance.

03 | OUR COMMUNITIES



ARQUS LIVING LABS

The Arqus Living Labs are an innovative initiative by the Arqus European University Alliance, designed to foster collaboration and co-creation among students, academics, professionals, and external stakeholders. It serves as an open, interdisciplinary space where challenges of the 21st century are addressed through education, knowledge-sharing, and innovation.

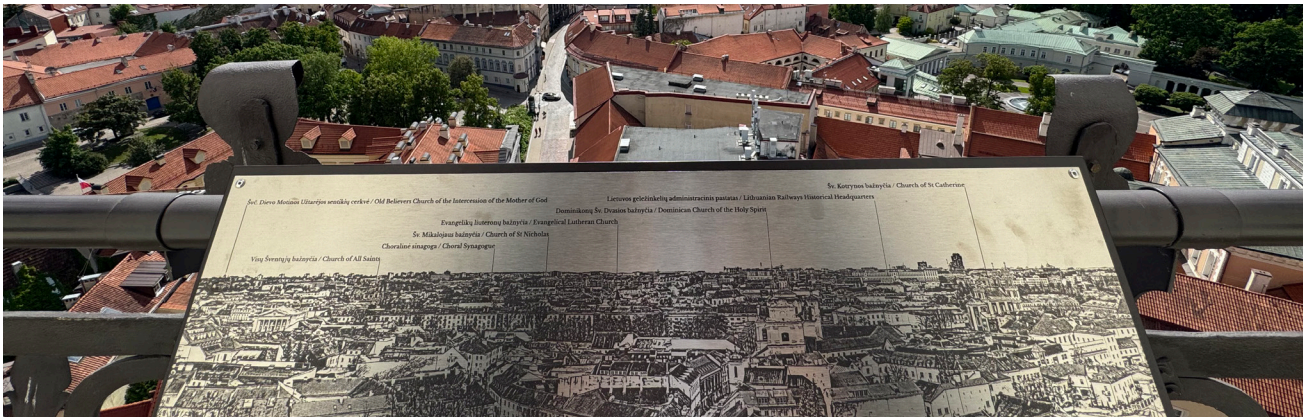
EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND HERITAGE LIVING LAB

The Living Lab European Identity & Heritage created the Challenged-Based Learning (CBL) programme “Dissonant Heritage”, launched in September 2025 with the international summer school “Dissonant Narratives: Dealing with European Universities” in Padua. This event showcased the rich interdisciplinary diversity in critical heritage research across Arqus universities and formed the basis for the subsequent lecture series. The online lecture series about “Critical Heritage Studies at Arqus: Concepts, Approaches and Findings” which was organized during the winter term 2025/26 featured scholars from Arqus universities, advancing Critical Heritage Studies and creating a sustainable educational resource accessible to a broad audience.

This academic journey culminated in the spring school in Vilnius (June 2026), titled “Dissonant Heritage: Contested Landscapes and European Identity”. With 25 master’s, 5 PhD students, and 10 experts participating, the event integrated mandatory lecture series content with interactive workshops, discussions, and excursions.

The outcomes will form the basis of a dynamic digital exhibition at Padua’s Palazzo Liviano, showcasing research on art, memory, and critical responsibility. Student and stakeholder contributions from the spring school will be embedded, transforming academic debate into accessible, teaching-relevant content. This exhibition will serve as a sustainable research and teaching resource.

Parallel to it, the Living Lab European Identity & Heritage organized thematic days, including a thinka-



thon on “Europe as a Global Actor” (December 2025), focusing on career pathways for European Studies graduates. Roundtables, world cafés, and guest lectures further enriched stakeholder engagement. Further thematic days took place in Graz (January 2026) on “Critical Heritage within European Studies Education” where master’s and PhD researchers came together to explore interdisciplinary approaches to critical heritage in European Studies.

Together, these activities exemplify Arqus’ commitment to collaborative, impactful, and sustainable education in critical heritage studies.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING LAB

Between October 2025 and September 2026, the CChSD Cluster brought together students, academics, professional staff and external partners through activities involving all nine Arqus universities. Through interdisciplinary education, scientific exchange, mobility and public engagement, the Cluster addressed climate resilience, sustainability, biodiversity, responsible resource use, environmental education and One Health, recognising the links between human, animal and environmental health.



Challenge-based and hands-on learning remained central to its work. International student teams addressed real-world sustainability challenges through Blended Intensive Programmes, project work, laboratory training and field activities. The programmes covered infectious diseases, antimicrobial resistance, cell death and autophagy, plant adaptation to climate change, sustainable urban development and water management.
The Cluster also strengthened cooperation with the wider society. Arqus Verde connected botanical gardens from five Arqus universities around biodiversity conservation, living collections and environmental education. EDU-CLIMA promoted climate education and eco-storytelling, while CRM9: Connecting on Critical Raw Materials involved researchers, schools, businesses, public authorities and wider audiences in exploring the environmental, economic and technological dimensions of critical raw materials. Proximity Matters and Beyond the City connected student research with sustainable food systems, tourism and spatial development.

The Cross-disciplinary Series of Seminars on Climate Change and Sustainable Development continued to provide a recurring space for scientific exchange across disciplines and institutions, addressing climate change, bioaerosols, antimicrobial resistance, food systems and water-related challenges.

Together, these educational, scientific and public engagement activities generated teaching materials, recorded lectures and webinars, student projects, research reports and other resources for wider dissemination and future use. By connecting research-based knowledge with education and societal engagement, the Cluster strengthened interdisciplinary networks and established founda-



tions for continued cooperation within the future Arqus Academic Hubs.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION LIVING LAB

In 2025/26, the Living Lab for Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation continued its work on making AI and technological innovations understandable for everyone. Guided by scientific evidence and democratic values, the Living Lab brought together students, academics, professionals, and external stakeholders, including companies, non-governmental organisations, and local and regional authorities, to address Europe's long-term digital challenges through education, research, and innovation.

A central initiative in this effort was the "JAI (Journey through Artificial Intelligence) Lecture Series," designed to foster AI literacy and promote informed societal discourse. Tailored specifically for non-expert audiences, these sessions broke down complex AI concepts into accessible language, featuring experts from across the Arqus universities. The second edition of the series was successfully concluded during this academic year, bringing the cumulative total across both editions to 9 lectures and engaging over 500 participants.

To ensure open access and long-term impact, the sessions were conducted in a hybrid format, combining in-person attendance with live online participation. All 9 lectures were recorded and published on the Arqus YouTube channel. By creating this open-access repository, the Living Lab established a sustainable educational resource, sharing expertise from across the Alliance with the wider public.

ARQUS COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

In recent years, 19 Communities of Practice (CoPs) actively developed their initiatives and explored new opportunities for cooperation. Their work covered a broad range of topics, demonstrating how bottom-up collaboration can connect people, expertise, and experience across the Arqus Alliance.

Over the reporting period, CoPs organized around 50 events, workshops, online seminars, webinars, and meetings, creating valuable opportunities to share knowledge and build new professional connections. Activities encompassed specialized workshops on Data Protection, dedicated meetings of the Research Support Officers CoP, sessions on Open Scholarship and Open Science, and events exploring the integration of AI in libraries. Other initiatives addressed European Heritage, global campuses, English-Medium Instruction, research contracts, legal cooperation, financial management, and language-centre collaboration.

CoPs also actively engaged with emerging societal and technological trends. In particular, activities focused on AI in Language Teaching and Learning featured a series of webinars covering AI ethics, responsible use, AI-supported foreign language instruction, learner autonomy, and assessment strategies in the GenAI era. These actions enabled members across partner institutions to exchange practical experiences and co-create innovative practices.

An important milestone in this trajectory was the face-to-face meeting hosted by Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1 in April 2026. This gathering brought together CoP co-leads and members from across the Alliance to reflect on achievements, address operational challenges, share solutions, and plan future collaborative avenues.

Throughout the final year of Arqus II, initial contacts progressively transformed into robust professional networks. Ultimately, the Arqus II CoPs reaffirmed their value as vital spaces for peer learning, knowledge exchange, and institutional connection, building a strong foundation for future joint endeavors across all member universities.

OPEN SCIENCE AMBASSADORS NETWORK



The Arqus Open Science Ambassador Network brings together experts and advocates from across the Alliance to promote open research practices, share discipline-specific knowledge, and support the broader academic community. Functioning as key intermediaries between faculties, university leadership, and Arqus, the Ambassadors are driven by a shared commitment to openness, free access to knowledge, and research reproducibility. Throughout the 2025–26 academic year, a primary highlight of the network's work was the continued promotion and advancement of the Arqus Open Science Award, recognizing initiatives and individuals that actively champion transparent research workflows and open data across partner institutions.

A key milestone of the reporting period was the Open Science Ambassador Network Workshop Days, held on 23 and 24 March 2026 at Maynooth University. Funded by the Arqus Innovation Fund, the meeting allowed members of the Community of Practice to meet face-to-face and define strategic next steps. Aligned with the Arqus Joint Long-Term Strategy 2026–2035, the group established priorities for the coming period, including the delivery of specialized webinar series, the sharing of discipline-specific resources, and the organization of the second edition of the Open Science Award, with nominations to be conferred at the Arqus Annual Conference in July 2026. Internal sessions also reviewed institutional progress and lab-level policy implementations, underscoring shared priorities such as legal support for data sharing, dedicated human resources, and positive evaluation frameworks for open science adoption.

The workshop days also featured a public event on 23 March aimed at fostering dialogue on open research practices across partner universities. Dedicated sessions explored critical dimensions of Open Science, including open licensing for software and research outputs, machine learning applications for software preservation and reproducibility, and national reproducibility network initiatives. Combined with informal networking activities, the





meeting successfully strengthened inter-institutional connections, paving the way for continued collaborative progress across the Alliance.

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY HUB

Following the approval of the Arqus EDI Action Plan at the Annual Conference 2025 in Leipzig, the Alliance's commitment to equity and accessibility entered a new phase. Providing a shared roadmap and vision, the Action Plan has established a holistic framework to embed Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) across all Arqus activities. In this context, the Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Hub has increasingly operated as a cross-cutting support structure for the entire Alliance, fostering shared responsibility, ownership and active involvement towards inclusion.

During the 2025–2026 academic year, this collaborative model was reflected in key joint actions:



Empowering students
On 3 December 2025, the Inclusion and Diversity Hub teamed up with the Arqus Student Agora for the second Arqus Student Lab: "Creating Communities", engaging students in co-creating inclusive practices.

Embedding EDI in Curricula
On 27 April 2026, during the meeting of academic and administrative staff of Arqus universities engaged in setting up Joint Programmes across the Alliance, Paula Trigueiros and Kamila Kaminska conducted a milestone workshop titled "How to make joint programmes Inclusive and Accessible". The session provided staff with actionable strategies to design joint programmes offering fair and accessible opportunities for underrepresented groups across all stages—from recruitment and admission to curriculum design and student retention. Moving beyond mere representation, the workshop framed Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) as the intentional removal of barriers, introducing participants to the framework of Universal Design for



Learning (UDL) through an intuitive metaphor: The Knowledge Banquet. By approaching teaching and programme management like attentive hosts planning an accessible, flexible, and welcoming gathering, participants explored multimodal content delivery, learner needs assessment, sensory and physical accessibility, and proactive scaffolding. Through collaborative hands-on exercises and analytical tools such as SWOT and PESTEL, staff were equipped to critically assess institutional conditions and translate inclusive pedagogical practices into sustainable, transferable solutions across their home institutions.

Fostering Interdisciplinary Learning

Partnering with the working group promoting the engagement of and connections with Local Ecosystems, the Inclusion & Diversity Hub launched the Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) "Diversity of Universal Design for Learning and Technology – Designing Inclusive Urban Learning Environments". Blending preparatory virtual sessions with a five-day intensive physical mobility week in Wrocław (1–5 June 2026), this initiative brought together academics and students from five Arqus partner universities (Leipzig, Minho, Granada, Wrocław and Padua) across multiple disciplines. The curriculum introduced participants to core Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, digital accessibility standards, assistive technologies, and accessible communication strategies such as Easy Language and audio description. During the on-site mobility, students applied these theoretical foundations to experiential fieldwork, treating the city and its cultural venues as active, dynamic learning spaces. Working in interdisciplinary teams, participants co-designed and presented tangible prototypes—including accessible urban routes, multilingual digital guides, and inclusive museum interventions—culminating in the "City as a Learning Space for All" showcase. Overall, the programme successfully fostered critical problem-solving, collaborative empathy, and civic engagement, providing students with actionable competences to transform urban environments and education into participatory, accessible ecosystems.

Through these synergies, the Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Hub continued to translate the EDI Action Plan into cohesive, transformative action, building

an inclusive ecosystem across the Arqus community.

PLURILINGUAL AND INTERCULTURAL HUB

The activities and programmes offered by the Plurilingualism and Intercultural Hub continue to draw large numbers of participation and serve as the gateway for students and staff to engage further with the Arqus community. In 2025–26, the opportunities ranged from the Arqus Language Cafés, Arqus Lounge, A1 courses, summer schools, and online lecture and webinar series to four communities of practice and several language resources and tools.

A key highlight was the European Day of Languages celebration on 26 September 2025, where the Arqus Dives event gave participants a chance to explore 19 different languages in 45–minute sessions. With over 500 registrations, the event clearly showed how eager the community is to learn new languages. Alongside this event, the 11th and 12th editions of the Arqus Cafés ran from October 2025 to May 2026, offering regular practice in all official Arqus languages and several others each semester. Additionally, the second round of the Arqus Lounge provided staff with a friendly space to practice their English and build lasting connections across partner universities.



Language learning opportunities remained in high demand. The A1 courses were expanded to offer all the Arqus languages as well as our lecture series to include the following: 9 Months, 9 Universities on YouTube, interactive English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) webinars and AI in Language Learning and Teaching.

Hands-on learning and institutional collaboration also thrived. Students gathered in Leipzig and Granada for the annual German and Spanish Summer Schools, while Vilnius University successfully launched the first semester of the Plurilingualism Module, which gives students a practical framework to learn new languages and build effective study strategies.

To support these events and activities, the Hub strengthened collaboration across member institutions through four active Communities of Practice (CoPs): Arqus English-Medium Instruction, Arqus Academic and Writing Support Centres, AI and Language Learning and Teaching, and the Network of Language Centre Directors. These groups organised a wide variety of workshops, networking meetings and semi-annual newsletters.

THE VIRTUAL OFFICE

During the period Oct-2025 to Sept-2026, the IT team set as its main challenge the implementation of the system that will form the foundation of the Alliance's digital environment for the coming years: The Arqus Virtual Office.

The Virtual Office is an academic management system that will allow the end-to-end management of the lifecycle of joint programmes carried out within the Alliance, from course offerings, the student application process, student selection, enrolment, group management, and the creation of teaching spaces on the virtual campus, through to assessment.

The Virtual Office will provide students with their own dedicated space (My office) to track academic progress, view grades, select training activities, check invoices and expenses, submit suggestions, and communicate with various stakeholders.

For academic coordinators, it will represent a major step forward, simplifying the monitoring of study plans, the issuance of Transcripts of Records and certificates, and the conversion of grades between the grading systems of the different Alliance universities.

The Virtual Office system is designed to facilitate interoperability with the management systems of the Alliance universities, implementing data exchange standards related to academic matters and facilitating access while ensuring security.

Although it will be a system in continuous evolution, the first version of the Virtual Office will be available during the month of October 2026. Ultimately, this system represents a significant step forward in the Arqus Alliance's ongoing journey toward digital transformation.

THE ARQUS DEVELOPMENT UNIT: DRIVING STRATEGIC PROGRESS AND QUALITY IN THE ALLIANCE

The Arqus Development Unit plays a key role in shaping the future direction of the Alliance. Over the past year, it has focused on strengthening collaboration and developing strategic tools to support the Alliance's long-term goals. For example, the Arqus Strategic Development Dashboard (ASDD) can now be accessed via the "Arqus in Numbers" section on Arqus Plaza, which is available to all Arqus members after logging in.

Picture of Visualisation
The Development Unit has also contributed significantly to the development of the Alliance's Long-Term Strategy. This strategy sets out a shared vision for the future, outlining key goals and priorities for the coming years. Through a collaborative process, it brought together input from across the Alliance, ensuring that the strategy reflects the needs and ambitions of all members.

Another important focus for the Arqus Development Unit has been the development and implementation of quality management (QM) processes and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The establishment of clear guidelines and standardised procedures helps ensure that activities across the Alliance are carried out efficiently, transparently, and to a high standard. These efforts not only support consistency and reliability in daily operations but also make it easier for new members to understand and follow established practices. The introduction of SOPs has been particularly valuable in streamlining workflows and supporting continuous improvement within the Alliance.

In summary, the Development Unit's work on the ASDD, the Joint Long-Term Strategy, and the quality management is helping to make the Alliance more structured, professional and ready to meet future challenges.

04 | ARQUS STUDENT AGORA



The 2025/26 academic year was another productive and engaging period for the Arqus Student Agora, strengthening its role as a platform for student participation, collaboration, and leadership across the Alliance. Through a range of initiatives and activities, students actively contributed to fostering innovation, community building, and meaningful engagement within Arqus.

The year began with welcome and orientation events organized across partner universities, helping new and returning students connect, discover Arqus opportunities, and build a stronger sense of belonging within a diverse European academic community.

At the start of the academic year, the third editions of the Arqus Student Ambassadors Programme (ASAP) and the Alumni Mentorship Programme (AMP) were launched. Both initiatives continued to support networking, peer learning, and leadership development. Student Ambassadors promoted Arqus opportunities, mobility programmes, and student services through communication campaigns, webinars, and creative content. Their role was especially visible during the Arqus Annual Conference, where they contributed to communication activities and participated in a workshop on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

The Changemaker Projects also entered their implementation phase in 2025. Five student-led projects addressing themes such as climate action and human rights awareness developed their activities highlighting students' commitment to positive social impact.

Another key milestone was the online Student Lab–Agora: Activate Communities, held on 3 December. Bringing together around 100 participants, including student services professionals and stakeholders from across the Alliance, the event provided a valuable forum for exchanging good practices and strengthening collaboration.

In collaboration with the Talent and Innovation fund team, in March 2026, the Student Agora delivered the "My Career Toolkits" workshop in Granada for the Arqus Talent Scholarship beneficiaries. In April, six Arqus students participated in the European Student Assembly in Strasbourg, contributing to policy discussions and presenting recommendations at the European Parliament. Student representation remained a priority throughout the year. The Student Agora co-leads and Student Council met in Padua, Lyon, and again during the Annual Conference in Maynooth to advance cooperation and coordinate future initiatives.

LEARNING PATHWAYS

During 2025–2026, the Arqus Learning Pathways team made significant progress in expanding the Arqus joint educational offer. Major milestones were reached in the development of joint programmes and micro-credentials, while continued support for programme consortia strengthened collaboration between partner universities and contributed to the implementation of innovative, high-quality and flexible learning opportunities.

ARQUS JOINT PROGRAMMES

During this period, several Arqus joint programmes reached major milestones, bringing them from the development phase to accreditation and implementation.

The Joint Master's Programme in Food, Nutrition and Health became the first programme developed under Arqus II to enter the implementation phase. Following successful accreditation under the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, the programme will welcome its first students in the 2026/2027 academic year.



Another important achievement was the completion of the Joint Master's Programme in Translation, Technologies and Artificial Intelligence. Following a successful external evaluation under the European Approach, the programme received a highly positive recommendation for accreditation from the expert panel and is expected to receive its final accreditation decision in September 2026.

The Joint Bachelor's Programme in Physics for Technology has also been fully developed and submitted for external evaluation. At the same time, three additional programmes — the Bachelor's Double Degree in Business Data Analytics and Economics, the Joint Master's Programme in Digital Environmental Law: Navigating Sustainability Challenges in the Age of Technology, and the Joint Master's Programme in Sustainable Development — are approaching the final stage of development.

TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN DEGREE LABEL

Four joint programmes developed under Arqus II, together with two established Arqus joint programmes launched under Arqus I, are participating in the EDLive – European Degree Label Live: From Vision to Action project, coordinated by the University of Graz. The project was successfully selected for funding by the European Commission, receiving an outstanding evaluation score of 88/100. Through EDLive, the selected Arqus joint programmes will be further developed and aligned with the criteria of the future European Degree Label — an initiative that aims to recognise high-quality joint programmes delivered through transnational cooperation and to strengthen their



quality, international recognition and visibility across Europe. The participation in EDLive positions Arqus among the alliances contributing to the implementation of the future European Degree framework and reinforces its commitment to building a more integrated European Higher Education Area.

SUPPORTING JOINT PROGRAMME TEAMS

The successful development of joint study programmes requires close collaboration between academic and administrative staff, as well as expertise in curriculum design, quality assurance and international cooperation. Throughout the year, the Arqus Learning Pathways team supported programme consortia through workshops, training activities and individual consultations.

A key highlight was the *Joint Programmes Workshop,* organised in April 2026 at the University of Minho in Braga, Portugal. The event focused on programme implementation, inclusion and accessibility, and the European Degree Label initiative, while providing a valuable opportunity for programme teams to exchange experiences and discuss common challenges.

The Interactive *Collaborative Review Lab and Collaborative Improvement Lab* sessions enabled participants to share practical solutions and identify improvements for future joint programme development. The workshop received very positive feedback, demonstrating the value of collaboration, peer learning and continuous support in building successful joint programmes.



ARQUS JOINT MICRO-CREDENTIALS

The development of joint micro-credentials was one of the main activities of the Arqus Learning Pathways team during this period, expanding flexible learning opportunities for students and lifelong learners across Europe. Today, 15 Arqus joint micro-credentials are at different stages of development and implementation. In 2026, the first three Arqus joint micro-credentials were successfully launched, attracting strong interest from Arqus students and lifelong learners from different countries. Eight additional micro-credentials have been fully developed and opened for enrolment in September 2026. All Arqus joint micro-credentials are published in the Arqus Course Catalogue, where prospective participants can find course descriptions, schedules, registration links and contact information. Together, these micro-credentials are expanding the Alliance's educational offer and creating new opportunities for flexible international learning.



06 | TEACHING INNOVATION



Between October 2025 and September 2026, the Arqus Teaching Innovation initiative continued to strengthen teaching excellence and innovation across the Alliance through a diverse portfolio of staff development activities. A key achievement was the delivery of 10 online teaching innovation events, including workshops, webinar series, and teaching excellence sessions, reaching more than 900 registered participants across Arqus partner universities. The activities focused on timely topics such as artificial intelligence in teaching and learning, collaborative learning, formative assessment, scholarship of teaching and learning, and the dissemination of award-winning teaching practices.

The most successful action was the "AI in Teaching & Learning: International Perspectives and Best Practices" webinar series, which ran between November 2025 and January 2026. The five sessions demonstrated strong demand for professional development in AI-enhanced education, bringing together presenters from across the Alliance and facilitating the exchange of practical approaches to integrating AI into teaching and learning. A major milestone during the reporting period was the 2026 Arqus Teaching Innovation Summer School, hosted by the University of Wrocław in July 2026. Under the theme "Language as a Multifaceted Tool in the Teaching and Learning Environment", the event brought together 34 academic staff members from eight Arqus universities for an intensive program focused on communication, multilingualism, data literacy, and inclusive teaching practices.

The initiative also expanded the impact and sustainability of its work through the continued development of the Arqus Online Resource Centre, adding more than 100 teaching and learning resources, including workshop materials, recordings, guides, and open educational resources. This repository has become an important mechanism for sharing good practices and extending the reach of these pedagogical activities beyond individual events.

In addition, the Alliance continued to support innovation through the Arqus Teaching Innovation Fund. Designed to foster joint pedagogical development, the fund supported 19 collaborative projects that promoted student-centered, innovative, and future-oriented teaching practices across member universities. The call invited proposals for small-scale collaborative projects and joint programme development projects. Funding was earmarked for essential operational expenses such as travel and stay for physical meetings, student assistant support, material production, and consumables. Through a rigorous selection process based on innovation, feasibility, pedagogical quality, and cross-institutional cooperation, the programme successfully strengthened interinstitutional collaboration and encouraged the co-creation and testing of new pedagogical approaches.

07 | ARQUS PHD PURSUIT



The Arqus PhD Pursuit team supports Early-Stage Researchers and prepares them for careers inside and outside academia on a European level. We provide PhDs and postdoctoral researchers with the skills necessary to become internationally competitive.

Furthermore, Arqus is dedicated to including a bigger number of academic staff in its activities. An active Arqus network has been created to share projects, ideas, and activities for Early-Stage Researchers.

MENTORING PROGRAMME FOR EARLY-STAGE RESEARCHERS

Our interdisciplinary mentoring programme supports doctoral and postdoctoral researchers in their academic career development through peer-group training sessions and connecting them with experienced researchers who serve as mentors.
The most recent round of the 9–month programme kicked off in Graz in October 2025. Until June 2026, 29 Early-Stage Researchers (3 per Arqus partner) benefited from one-on-one support by their mentor. Additionally, the mentees received training sessions on research funding, establishing and maintaining academic networks, artificial intelligence, time management, and possible next career steps.
The mentoring programme has proven to be a valuable resource for a successful career in academia and brings about collaborations between researchers of different career stages and disciplines.

PHD WEEK FOR CAREERS BEYOND ACADEMIA

Our career week for Early-Stage Researchers has become a much-anticipated event every year. After highly successful events in Granada (2023), Wrocław (2024) and Padua (2025), an additional career week took place in Maynooth in June 2026.
The 2026 PhD Career Week was a collaboration of Maynooth University's Graduate Research Academy, Arqus Office, the ADVANCE CRT programme, and careers advisers and partner universities within the Arqus Alliance. Because of this, up to 78 PhD researchers took part in the career week, 33 of which were invited by Arqus.

During this week of workshops, the attendees received training on topics such as job interview skills, networking, communication and skill mapping. Moreover, in an industry and academic round table, they met up with mentors from industry, public service, not-for-profit groups and academia. This programme was aimed at empowering and supporting them in the necessary first steps for their future career.




Maynooth University
If you are a
Maynooth Student
you are an
arQus
Maynooth University
National University of Ireland Maynooth
arQus
European University Alliance
Nine Universities one Alliance

08 | ARQUS TALENT & INNOVATION FUND



ARQUS TALENT SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The Arqus Talent Scholarship Fund is a scholarship scheme aimed at talented students who wish to pursue complete postgraduate studies (Master's or Doctorate) at one of the Arqus partner universities. A compulsory mobility phase (study period, training, research stay) at a second Arqus partner university is included, while the Alliance encourages applicants to undertake multiple and longer stays at the different universities within the Arqus Alliance. This initiative is particularly committed to refugees, asylum seekers, and students with fewer opportunities.

In March 2026, a Gathering Event was organised in Granada to enhance the visibility and impact of the initiative, promote networking between beneficiaries and academics, and provide students with a platform to present their work as part of a Three-Minute Thesis® Competition. In total, twenty scholarship holders, ten supervisors, four Arqus student representatives, and over thirty Arqus colleagues participated in the event.

ARQUS INNOVATION FUND

The Arqus Innovation Fund is an Arqus initiative that offers funding to incentivise innovative, internal, bottom-up activities from Arqus staff and students through the provision of seed-funding. This funding aims to foster innovation and entrepreneurial mindset, strengthen the visibility of Arqus within local campus communities, and promote further staff engagement and a sense of shared ownership in the Alliance's progress and long-term institutional transformation. By supporting initiatives with a strong cross-border dimension, the fund aims for global outreach, positioning the Arqus Alliance as a key actor in collaborative university innovation. The activities funded align with the objectives of the Alliance and its three major focus areas: "Education, Research & Innovation, and Social Engagement".

In total, 56 initiatives were selected for funding across the four calls, supporting further 205 sub-activities, including challenge-based learning programmes, collaboration project labs, cross-disciplinary seminars, dissemination events for the general public, joint short-term study projects, research training and joint workshops. The outreach of these initiatives was further enhanced by the creation of a dissemination website launched in May 2026, and a booklet of the bottom-up initiatives published in July 2026.

DESIGNING JOINT CALLS AND FINAL REPORT

A second version of the Handbook on Joint Calls was finalised in July 2026. This handbook provides guidance and advice for the preparation and publication of joint calls, including best practice examples from all Alliance members.

To conclude the work of the Arqus Talent & Innovation Fund, a final report was drafted, focusing not only on the development and implementation of both funding schemes, Arqus Talent Scholarship Fund and Arqus Innovation Fund, calls, beneficiaries, execution, impact, and evaluation of the schemes, but also on recommendations for future enhancement and institutionalisation.

09 | PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP



INNOVATORS AWARDS

The Arqus International Innovators Award has a growing history within the Alliance. The initiative was launched in 2020 under the name 'Virtual Company Creation Challenge' and, from its fourth edition in 2023, adopted its current name. Since then, the competition has brought together university-based start-ups from across the Alliance, giving them the opportunity to present their business models in a European context and gain visibility and networking opportunities beyond their local ecosystems.

The 2025 edition, held in October, brought together six finalist teams from Arqus universities. Members of the Arqus community voted online for their favourite project, with more than 1,100 votes. ARC Technica, from the University of Minho, was selected as the winner, receiving the Start Cup Padova Final in Padua as part of the prize.

The 2026 edition continued this tradition, with the finalist teams presenting their projects and competing for the Arqus International Innovators Award. Elite Education Academy from Vilnius University was selected as the 2026 winner.

Across its different editions, the Award has provided a platform for university-based start-ups to showcase their projects, connect with the wider Arqus community and develop an international perspective on entrepreneurship and innovation. The initiative is developed within the framework of Arqus Linking Local Ecosystems, which aims to foster knowledge and technology transfer among local ecosystems and contribute to regional and European innovation strategies.

BIP MENTORING PROGRAMME

From 22 to 26 June 2026, the University of Minho hosted the third edition of the Blended Intensive Programme Mentoring Programme – Turning Ideas into Businesses and the International Staff Week University, Innovation and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems, bringing together people, ideas and expertise from across Europe.

The two initiatives created spaces for students, staff, academic staff, alumni, universities and regional partners to exchange knowledge, develop entrepreneurial skills and build lasting connections between local innovation ecosystems. While the BIP focuses on transforming ideas into viable business opportunities through hands-on learning and mentoring, the International Staff Week fosters institutional exchange and collaboration around innovation and entrepreneurship.

A key element of this connection is the active involvement of Arqus alumni as mentors. By sharing their professional experience, entrepreneurial journeys and networks, alumni become a bridge between generations and ecosystems, strengthening the Alliance's capacity to turn local potential into European opportunities.

This academic year, the 'Linking local ecosystems' working group has brought together the entrepreneurial ecosystems of the partner universities in two big occasions as part of its 'Arqus International Innovators Award' competition. In October 2025, the competition's finalists – start-up teams from six different universities – met in Padua to get to know the Italian partner's entrepreneurial ecosystem during the 'Start Cup Padua'. A year later, in July 2026, the finalists from 2026 met to present their projects and network at the "Alhambra Venture" in Granada. In both competitions, over 1,000 people viewed the projects and cast their votes online.

Individual start-up teams also travelled to the partner incubators in between events to gain a European perspective on their start-up ideas. For example, the Leipzig-based biotech start-up 'AI-driven therapeutics' established links with the 'Centre of Biological Engineering' in Braga.

Following the organisation of two summer schools last year based on a service-learning approach, work is now underway to make such a module a permanent feature.



10 | ARQUS ON THE MOVE



Arqus on the Move continues to promote international mobility across the Alliance by creating more inclusive, sustainable and accessible opportunities for students and staff. The Open Mobility Agreement provides a framework for cooperation among partner universities and more seamless mobility processes.

Mobility within the Alliance has continued to grow steadily. Compared with three years ago, the overall number of mobilities has more than doubled, largely thanks to the expansion of innovative mobility formats alongside traditional exchanges. Twinning projects, Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) and Criss-Cross mobilities are making international experiences more flexible and accessible, creating new opportunities for collaboration among students and academics.

These developments have been closely monitored through the work of the Arqus Mobility Observatory (AMO), which supports evidence-based mobility development across the Alliance through the collection and analysis of mobility data. The publication of the third Arqus Mobility Report, covering the 2024/2025 academic year, provided a comprehensive overview of mobility developments during the Arqus II phase. Bringing together the results of three academic years, the report highlighted key trends in student and staff mobility across the Alliance and provided recommendations to support the future development of mobility policies and initiatives.

Two editions of the Arqus moVEs virtual exchange programme took place between November 2025 and June 2026. Designed as a pre-mobility programme, Arqus moVEs helps students develop intercultural awareness, communication and collaboration skills before embarking on an international experience. The initiative attracted participants from across the Alliance and beyond, fostering intercultural exchange through digital platforms.

Sustainability remained a central element of Arqus on the Move activities. Green Mobility Days 2026 included Alliance-wide initiatives, such as a webinar dedicated to professional services staff, together with local activities involving students. The Tell Your (Green) Mobility Story video contest encouraged participants to share their experiences of sustainable mobility, attracting enthusiastic participation and spreading a greener approach throughout the Arqus community.

The March 2026 Twinning call attracted a large number of high-quality applications, leading to the selection of 11 projects fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange across the Alliance. The BIP call also attracted growing interest, with four new Blended Intensive Programmes selected to expand international learning opportunities while building on the experience of previous editions.

Starting from the 2025/26 academic year, Arqus mobile students will benefit from webinars created in collaboration between Arqus on the Move, the Student Agora and the Arqus Student Ambassadors. These sessions allow students to exchange with peers on academic life, accommodation and practical aspects of living abroad, helping them prepare for their mobility experience.

Looking ahead, Arqus on the Move will continue to build on these achievements by creating new opportunities for collaboration, learning and exchange, ensuring that mobility remains an accessible and transformative experience across Arqus.


GRANADA
2031
CAPITAL EUROPEA DE LA CULTURA
CIUDAD CANDIDATA


Week
13-17
October
17 de October
Panorâmico
restaurant


International
Women's Day
8 MARCH


#ERASMUS+
DAYS
13 > 18
of October
2025



ARQUS KNOWLEDGE PILLS

7 episodes this year.

The monthly podcast of the Arqus Alliance introduces research ongoing at Arqus universities in a short and comprehensive way. Each episode highlights one researcher from an Arqus university by inviting them to explain their research in 15 to 20 minutes.

The Arqus Knowledge Pills brings the scientific expertise of all partner universities through interviews that revolve around special research fields with social relevance or current topics. From October 2025 to September 2026, 7 new episodes were published, bringing the total number of episodes to 49.



EUROPE DAY

On the occasion of Europe Day, aiming to celebrate the achievements of cooperation and defend democratic freedom, we prepared a series of three interview with three researchers specialised in this topic – Rascha Albaba Acosta, Isabel Estrada Carvalhais, Mario Nicolás López Martínez – along with some special content in social media designed to reflect on the present challenges and future prospects of Europe from different academic and disciplinary perspectives.

ARQUS WOMEN IN STEM

Regarding the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, we created a social media campaign showcasing the lives and journeys of women scientists in STEM from the Arqus Alliance. The campaign was shared across Arqus' social media platforms in the form of short interviews, lasting between 2 and 5 minutes, in which the participants talked about their careers and research, shared insights from their PhD theses, and offered advice to future women and girls interested in pursuing a career in STEM. The goal was to encourage young girls and women to pursue careers in STEM and to increase the visibility of the work and contributions of women scientists within the Alliance. The campaign went from 11 February 2026 until 5 August 2026.



ARQUS STUDENT TAKE OVER

During the Arqus Annual Conference 2026 at Maynooth University, the Arqus Student Ambassador actively contributed to the Arqus social media channels and content creation activities. Their participation resulted in a series of communication actions, including the production of a photo album on Flickr, articles for the Arqus repository, as well as a series of Instagram reels and posts. These communication activities achieved significant visibility and engagement across Arqus' social media platforms, providing a first-hand perspective from the students of the Conference.

ARQUS COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICES MEMBERS' VIDEOS

Arqus Communities of Practice bring together professionals from Arqus partner universities to share knowledge, exchange good practices, and learn from one another across borders.

In this interview series, participants from different Arqus Communities of Practice (CoPs) offer a glimpse into the people behind the communities, their work and experiences, and the impact of their collaboration within the Alliance.





| FIGURES |

Follow us on
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LinkedIn

6 129 followers

Impressions in the last year	209,970K
Reactions in the last year:	4 326

Facebook

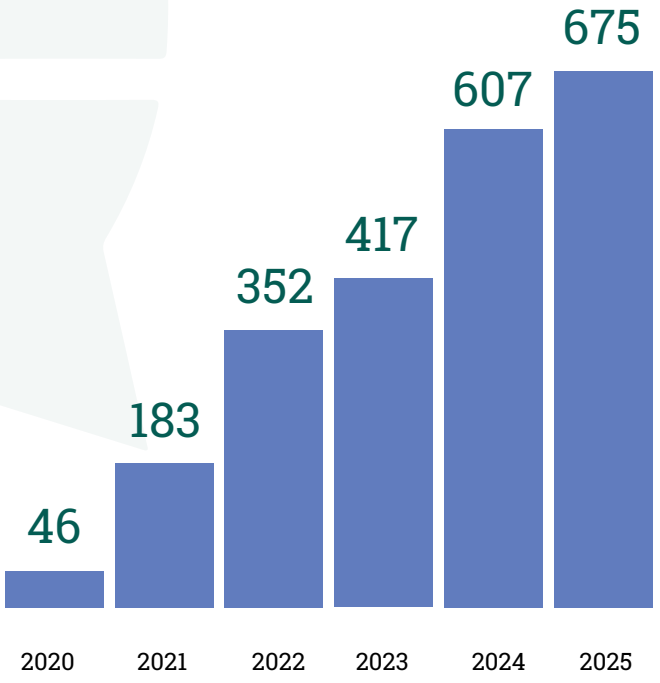
1 701 followers

69 167 views

Instagram

3 873 followers

Total number of publications



YouTube

Subscribers: **1 344**

arqus-alliance.eu

207 000 active users

327 news

489 000 pageviews

Arqus Knowledge Pills

237 Followers

7 new episodes

49 episodes in total

445 Streams and plays

Newsletter

Subscribers: **4 496**

Contacts count: **5 673**

12 | STRONGER TOGETHER

European University Alliance

ARQUS PARTICIPATES IN DAAD SEMINAR ON EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ALLIANCES AS ROLE MODELS

21 October 2025

Dorothy Kelly, Coordinator of the Arqus Alliance, participated in the Training and Cooperation Activity (TCA) “European Universities Alliances as role models. Putting it into practice: Spreading innovative results from European Universities alliances to other higher education institutions”, organized by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in Bonn.

The conference aimed to share good practices and transferable outcomes from the European Universities Initiative (EUI) with the wider higher education community, focusing particularly on institutions that are not part of an alliance. The discussions drew on the findings of the European Commission study on the transformational potential of the EUI, as well as the survey “European Universities Alliances as Role Models: Uncovering the Needs and Expectations of (other) Higher Education Institutions to Benefit from the Initiative”.

During the event, Dorothy Kelly contributed to the “Mobility” workshop, where she framed mobility as an enabler and instrument rather than an end in itself. She highlighted the strong tradition and extensive experience of Arqus partners in student and staff mobility globally and presented key initiatives such as the Arqus Open Mobility Agreement, which allows students to study across alliance universities without prior inter-faculty agreements, and the International Soft Landing for Young Entrepreneurs Initiative, which facilitates exchanges between student entrepreneurs. Patrycja Matusz, Vice-Rector for Internationalisation at the University of Wrocław, also actively participated in the event representing the Alliance.



ARQUS PARTICIPATES IN THE EQAR MEMBERS DIALOGUE 2025 IN BRUSSELS

16 October 2025

Ulrike Krawagna (University of Graz) represented the Arqus Alliance at the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) Members' Dialogue 2025, held in Brussels. Participating as an expert in the development of Joint Programmes within Arqus, she took part in the panel session titled "The European Approach in practice".

Moderated by Ronny Heintze (AQAS), the panel featured diverse perspectives from ministries, quality assurance agencies, and universities, including contributions from Robin Schormans (Maastricht University / YUFE Alliance) and Eva Fernández de Labastida (Unibasq). Speakers shared their practical experiences with the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, examining both its added value and the challenges encountered, while reflecting on its success in paving the way for future cooperation. The discussion also addressed the practical implementation of Joint Programmes alongside the upcoming European Degree label, analyzing how these developments will influence the future application of the European Approach. Through this contribution, Arqus reaffirmed its commitment to advancing quality assurance frameworks and supporting seamless academic integration across European University Alliances.



ARQUS SHARES BEST PRACTICES AT THE UNITA STAFF WEEK

15–16 October 2025

The Arqus Alliance participated in the UNITA Staff Week, hosted by the UNITA Alliance (Universitas Montium), an alliance of ten universities and two associated partners from border, rural, and mountain regions of romance language-speaking countries across Europe. The event gathered project managers, governance representatives, and academic leaders to discuss collaborative models and share insights on advancing European higher education.

During the plenary session titled “The role of European Universities Alliances in advancing shared education futures”, Alessandra Gallerano (University of Padua) presented the Arqus vision alongside representatives from the EC2E and EUT+ Alliances. Her presentation highlighted concrete examples of Arqus good practices in the design, development, and implementation of joint study programmes.
By contributing to these discussions, Arqus reinforced its commitment to peer learning and inter-alliance dialogue. The staff week provided a platform to exchange expertise with partner networks, fostering mutual reflection on how European University Alliances can collectively shape the future of joint higher education offers.



DOROTHY KELLY MODERATES SESSION AT THE 1ST FORUM OF SPANISH UNIVERSITIES AT EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ALLIANCES

4–5 November 2025

Dorothy Anne Kelly, Coordinator of the Arqus Alliance, participated as a moderator in the first Forum of Spanish Universities at European University Alliances (UEUE), held at Universidad Rey Juan Carlos in Madrid. The UEUE operates as a national network connecting 52 Spanish universities engaged in the European Universities Initiative, offering a dedicated space to exchange knowledge, share practical experience, and highlight best practices across alliances.

During the two-day forum, participants focused on enhancing cooperation among Spanish universities within European Alliances and building synergies to increase the quality and impact of European higher education. Key discussions centered on advancing mobility models, joint study programmes, and long-term institutional collaboration. Dorothy Kelly's active role in the forum marked an important milestone in strengthening the engagement of Spanish higher education institutions within the European Universities Initiative and reinforcing Arqus's commitment to inter-alliance dialogue.



ARQUS PLAYS KEY ROLE IN SHAPING EUROPEAN DEGREE LABEL AT FOREU4ALL WORKSHOP

3–5 December 2025

Alessandra Gallerano (University of Padua) and Ulrike Krawagna (University of Graz) represented the Arqus Alliance at the first FOREU4ALL workshop, titled “Putting the European Degree Label into Action: Bridging Policy and Practice”, hosted at Ca’ Foscari University Venice. Co-organized by the FOREU4ALL Topical Groups on European Degree, Joint Programmes, and Quality Assurance alongside the EUTOPIA Alliance, the event gathered representatives from over 60 European University Alliances to discuss criteria and practical verification methods for the joint European Degree Label.

Through panel discussions, poster sessions, and co-creation workshops, participants addressed the integration of verification criteria into existing quality assurance frameworks-such as the ESG and the European Approach-to prevent administrative duplication while safeguarding academic freedom. Bringing together joint programme coordinators, quality assurance experts, policymakers, and student representatives, the workshop established concrete solutions to facilitate the development of high-quality joint degrees, marking a significant step toward making the European Degree Label a sustainable reality across Europe.



DOROTHY KELLY MEETS WITH THE UNIVERSITY PABLO DE OLAVIDE GOVERNING COUNCIL IN SEVILLE

9 December 2025

Dorothy Anne Kelly, Coordinator of the Arqus Alliance and President of the UEUE forum (Spanish Universities in European Alliances), visited the University Pablo de Olavide in Seville for a technical meeting with the university's Governing Council. The session focused on promoting the European Universities Initiative and addressing the development of new European degrees.

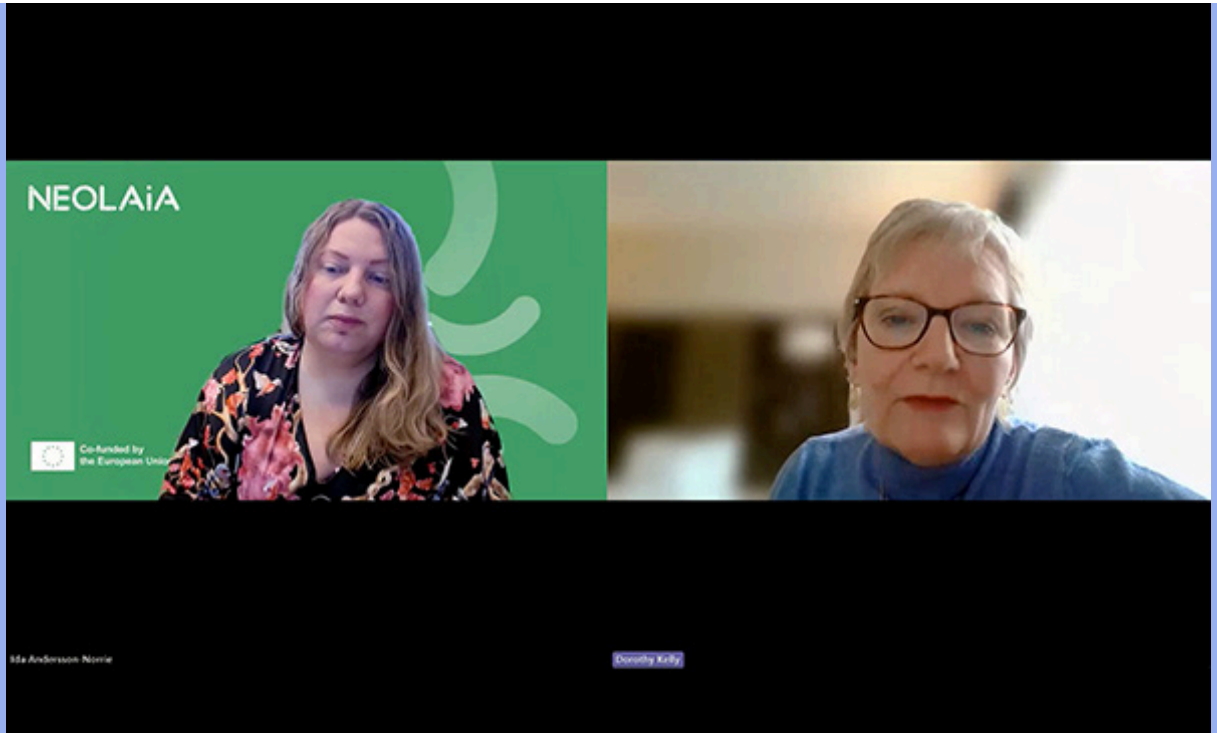
Through actions of this nature, Arqus continues to share its best practices to reinforce the European Alliances initiative, supporting its accessibility and inclusivity across the university community while shaping the future of higher education.



DOROTHY KELLY PARTICIPATES IN THE NEOLAIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2025

The University of Salerno in Italy hosted the NEOLAiA Annual Conference 2025, bringing together alliance leaders and higher education experts. As part of Arqus's ongoing commitment to strengthening ties across European University Alliances, Alliance Coordinator Dorothy Kelly was invited to join the discussions and share key insights on how alliances enable flexible mobility, new joint study programmes, shared research environments, and more inclusive cross-border opportunities.

During an interview session with Ida Andersson-Norrie (Örebro University, Sweden), Dorothy Kelly addressed the present and future of the European Higher Education Area, discussing the ongoing challenges in fully realizing the Bologna Process. She noted that while the Bologna Process faced risks of re-nationalisation and seemed stalled midway, the European Universities Initiative has served as a powerful driver of excellence, helping the higher education area return to foundational goals and address long-standing structural obstacles. She expressed optimism that through shared implementation strategies and inter-alliance dialogue, the original spirit of the Bologna Process will be revitalized across Europe.



GABRIEL MACIÁ PARTICIPATES IN DIPYUA WORKSHOP AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAGA

26–27 January 2026

Gabriel Maciá Fernández, Co-Lead of Digital Arqus, Coordinator of the Arqus Joint Master's Programme in International Cybersecurity and Cyberintelligence (MICAC), and Vice-Rector for Digital Transformation at the University of Granada, represented the Arqus Alliance at the "Digital Platforms of Young University Alliances (DiPYUA)" workshops held at the University of Malaga as part of the Uninovis International Conference 2026.

During the opening session, titled "Experiences from 1st and 2nd Generation Alliances – Challenges in Digital Infrastructures and Credentials", Gabriel Maciá shared insights on digital infrastructure and credentialing alongside Mathew Abrahams from NeurotechEU. Over the two-day workshop, representatives from first- and second-generation alliances (Arqus, NeurotechEU, Ulysseus, UNIC, UNIgreen) and younger alliances (EUNICoast, EUPeace, EUonAIR, UNINOVIS) collaborated to identify specific digital platform requirements for European University Alliances and evaluate EUA-tailored platforms such as Agora and Ouffox. The exchange provided a valuable forum for peer learning, helping shape sustainable digital solutions and interoperable credentials across European higher education networks.



ARQUS STRENGTHENS INTER-ALLIANCE COOPERATION AT UNIGREEN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2026

3 February 2026

Two representatives from the Arqus UMinho team took part in an inter-alliance meeting in Coimbra, Portugal, held as part of the UNIgreen International Conference 2026. The workshop brought together international mobility officers and administrative staff from UNIgreen partner universities with the objective of enhancing mobility management coordination, developing professional capacities, and promoting best practice exchange across European higher education institutions.

Key discussions focused on operational and administrative challenges in student and staff mobility, combining presentations with interactive sessions to support peer learning and joint problem-solving. A dedicated segment featured contributions from European University Alliances operating in Portugal, including Arqus and EUTOPIA, providing external perspectives on mobility governance, organizational structures, and innovative practices. Through its participation, Arqus reaffirmed its commitment to advancing international mobility procedures and deepening strategic cooperation across European University Alliances.



DOROTHY KELLY CONTRIBUTES TO DISCUSSIONS ON PERMANENT EDUCATION AT RUEPEP 2026 IN GRANADA

25–27 March 2026

The Arqus Alliance took part in the 24th Conference of the Spanish University Network for Postgraduate Studies and Permanent Education (RUEPEP), organized in collaboration with the Vice-Rectorate for Postgraduate and Permanent Education at the University of Granada. The 2026 conference focused on key strategic challenges in postgraduate studies and lifelong learning, including digital transformation, internationalization, graduate employability, and the social commitment of higher education institutions.

Within this framework, Alliance Coordinator Dorothy Kelly participated in a dedicated roundtable exploring the role of European University Alliances in permanent education, highlighting the importance of cross-institutional collaboration to strengthen international postgraduate models. Throughout the conference, discussions addressed cooperation with external stakeholders and businesses, innovative funding mechanisms such as endowed chairs and sponsorships, and the integration of university-specific programs into European alliance frameworks to adapt lifelong learning strategies to global socio-economic shifts.



SUCCESSFUL FOREU4ALL WORKSHOP IN GRANADA FOCUSES ON IMPACT AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

16–17 April 2026

Arqus and the University of Granada co-hosted the second FOREU4ALL transversal workshop on impact and project management, gathering representatives from European University Alliances to exchange expertise, share practical tools, and deepen collaboration across the European Universities Initiative. The two-day event provided a dedicated platform for strategic dialogue on shared institutional challenges, while fostering a strong sense of community and alignment across alliances.

The workshop emphasized moving beyond standard project logic to establish long-term, human-centered cooperation models. Key insights were highlighted by alliance leadership throughout the sessions. Gloria Nunes, Co-Chair of the FOREU4ALL Impact Topical Group, emphasized that meaningful transformation occurs when professionals collaborate to build initiatives beyond institutional boundaries. Jonas Salz, Chair of the FOREU4ALL Project Management Topical Group, stressed the need for alliances to transition past rigid performance reviews, using new collaborative tools to foster sustained cooperation. Dorothy Kelly, Coordinator of the Arqus Alliance, highlighted the European Universities Initiative's substantial impact on higher education, noting that effective impact assessment relies on trust, generosity, and strong professional networks alongside data collection.

The successful gathering reaffirmed the central role of alliances such as Arqus in driving structural transformation, sharing best practices, and advancing institutional cooperation across the European Higher Education Area. Three official photo albums documenting the key moments of the workshop were subsequently made available to the university community.



ARQUS TAKES PART IN EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES COORDINATORS MEETING IN BRUSSELS

Arqus participated in the European Universities Coordinators working retreat held in Brussels, a key forum dedicated to shaping the future of European university alliances within the upcoming Erasmus+ programming period (2028–2034). Representing the Alliance were Dorothy Kelly, Coordinator of Arqus, and Guadalupe Soriano Barabino, Director of Arqus at the University of Granada and prospective Alliance coordinator from 1 October.

The one-day working session gathered alliance coordinators and institutional representatives from across Europe to address strategic priorities, including the future structure of Erasmus+ support, mobility models, international cooperation, and performance monitoring frameworks. Through breakout sessions and plenary discussions, participants examined the role of alliances in strategic sectors, their contribution to the European Research Area, and ways to optimize reporting and evaluation systems. Arqus's active presence at this high-level meeting reinforces its commitment to contributing directly to European Higher Education Area policy discussions and guiding future European higher education framework design.



ARQUS STUDENTS TAKE PART IN THE EUROPEAN STUDENT ASSEMBLY 2026

The fifth edition of the European Student Assembly (ESA26) opened at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, bringing together over 200 students from across European University Alliances to address major political and societal challenges. Organized within the framework of the EUC Voices project, the three-day event provided a dedicated platform for civic engagement, interdisciplinary dialogue, and policy co-creation, culminating in strategic policy recommendations presented directly to the European Parliament. Participants worked across eight thematic panels covering core European priorities, including democracy, the circular economy, EU funding alignment, sustainable transport, digital literacy, borderless higher education, generational solidarity, and strategic autonomy.

Arqus was represented at ESA26 by a delegation of six students selected from partner universities, comprising Sarah Götze (Leipzig University), Ryan Bensaadi (Maynooth University), Chang Li (University of Padua), Lina Marie König (University of Graz), Sharon Janell Sanchez Rivero (University of Granada), and Anna Mishchenko (University of Padua). Notably, Anna Mishchenko served as coordinator for Panel 2 on scaling the circular economy, leading the preparatory work to structure discussions, facilitate collaboration, and synthesize diverse perspectives into actionable recommendations for resource efficiency and sustainability.

The delegation's active contribution highlights Arqus's commitment to embedding student leadership within European governance frameworks, demonstrating the pivotal role of European University Alliances in selecting talent, facilitating cross-border collaboration, and empowering students to shape European policy.



ARQUS AND OTHER EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ALLIANCES CONTRIBUTE TO THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN VIENNA

28 April 2026

Representatives of European University alliances, including Arqus, gathered at the MuseumsQuartier in Vienna for the event “Paving the Way Towards the Universities of the Future - Impulses for the Higher Education Strategy 2040”. Hosted by Austrian-led alliances EURECA-PRO (Montanuniversität Leoben) and E3UDRES2 (UAS St. Pölten), the meeting invited all alliances with Austrian partners to showcase their work through dedicated stands, fostering peer exchange and institutional visibility.

The event featured keynote presentations from European Commission representatives, national authorities, universities, and student organizations, alongside official remarks from Eva-Maria Holzleitner, Federal Minister for Women, Science and Research. A central panel discussion titled “European Universities as Innovation Drivers for Future Universities?” explored strategic development paths feeding directly into Austria’s Higher Education Strategy 2040.

Networking sessions such as “United Campuses of Europe!?” provided space to assess the achievements of Europe’s 73 active alliances. Through its participation, Arqus reaffirmed its commitment to advancing joint educational models, research capacity, and deep transnational cooperation across the European Higher Education Area.



FIRST EUROPEAN DOCTORAL DAY: ARQUS TAKES ACTION

13–14 May 2026

The Arqus Alliance actively participated in the inaugural European Doctoral Day, a continent-wide initiative launched in 2026 to highlight the central role of doctoral education and PhD holders in driving scientific excellence, innovation, and societal progress. Designed to complement broader European initiatives such as Choose Europe for Science, the event brought together academic networks across the continent, resulting in over 170 labelled activities registered on the Eurodocday platform.

Within this framework, Arqus organized dedicated online and hybrid sessions showcasing its collaborative research and doctoral support initiatives. On 13 May, Massimiliano Zattin (Padua) moderated an online session on mobility in doctoral pathways with Stéphane Daniele (Lyon 1) and Mireille van Poppel (Graz), alongside a hybrid event in Lyon on shaping talent through European excellence programmes. The activities concluded on 14 May at the University of Minho with a hybrid roundtable focused on internationalization opportunities available to PhD candidates across the Alliance.



ARQUS REPRESENTED AT EUROPEAN COMMISSION HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES

10 June 2026

The Rector of the University of Granada, Pedro Mercado, and the President of Maynooth University, Eeva Leinonen, represented the Arqus Alliance at the high-level meeting of European Universities Rectors and Presidents organized by the European Commission in Brussels. The summit gathered alliance leaders and EU representatives to address the completion of the European Education Area, the development of a European Degree, talent retention, and the role of alliances in European competitiveness and innovation. A key highlight was President Leinonen's participation as a speaker in recognition of Maynooth University hosting the upcoming IV European Forum of Alliances under Ireland's EU Council Presidency.

The meeting provided a platform for strategic dialogue with European Commission representatives, Members of the European Parliament, national authorities, and university leaders across Europe. Arqus welcomed the European Commission's continued commitment to the initiative, including the prospective return of UK institutions to the Erasmus+ programme from January 2027, which directly impacts Durham University as one of Arqus's associate partners alongside the National University of "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy". Through its participation, the Alliance reaffirmed its commitment to guiding the long-term governance and evolution of the European Universities Initiative.



ARQUS TAKES PART IN THE COIMBRA GROUP ANNUAL CONFERENCE, HIGHLIGHTING THE ROLE OF EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ALLIANCES IN TERRITORIAL TRANSFORMATION

16–19 June 2026

The Arqus Alliance actively participated in the Coimbra Group Annual Conference and General Assembly 2026, hosted by the University of Granada under the theme “Transforming the Local and Social Environment through Research and Innovation.” The conference brought together representatives from leading European universities to examine how higher education institutions can deepen engagement with local communities and address societal challenges through collaborative research and innovation. During the event, Arqus Coordinator Dorothy Kelly participated in a panel on best practices from European University Alliances, sharing approaches on how alliances contribute to regional development and cooperation within their surrounding ecosystems, and was subsequently honored at the Gala Dinner for her long-standing contributions to European university collaboration.

A key milestone of the conference was the official launch and signing of the Poitiers-Granada Declaration on the Collaboration between Universities and Cities during the closing session. Building on the original 2016 Poitiers Declaration, this renewed commitment reinforces university-city partnerships in areas such as sustainability, social cohesion, innovation, democratic participation, and territorial transformation. The declaration was signed by Ludovic Thilly (Chair of the Coimbra Group Executive Board), Pedro Mercado (Rector of the University of Granada), Marifrán Carazo (Mayor of Granada), and Francisco Rodríguez (President of the Granada Provincial Council), underscoring Arqus’s ongoing commitment to building strong bridges between universities, cities, and wider society.



ARQUS TAKES PART IN THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR “UNIVERSITIES IN ALLIANCE” ORGANISED BY CRUE AND UIMP

4 September 2026

Dorothy Kelly, Arqus Coordinator, participated in the international seminar “Universities in Alliance”, organised in Santander by the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE) in collaboration with the Menéndez Pelayo International University (UIMP). The event gathered representatives from higher education institutions and public bodies to examine the current state and future trajectory of European University Alliances, with a focus on their capacity to generate sustainable impact at global, European, and regional levels.

Throughout the sessions, participants addressed key strategic themes, including alliance governance structures, long-term financial sustainability, and the role of academic networks within innovation ecosystems and territorial development. Contributing the Arqus perspective, Dorothy Kelly highlighted the shared experiences of partner universities in designing innovative models for academic cooperation, joint initiatives, and institutional integration.

The seminar served to identify the underlying conditions required for university alliances to remain relevant, effective, and central to regional economic and social cohesion. Drawing on the insights generated during the discussions, CRUE plans to draft a comprehensive roadmap containing targeted recommendations for Spanish universities and national authorities. Through its involvement, Arqus reaffirmed its commitment to strategic dialogue and to embedding European alliances as key instruments for structural transformation in higher education.



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European University Alliance

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