D14.3 - ARQUS SERIES OF POLICY PAPERS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Date

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0. INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

The major overall aim of the European University Initiative is to effect - or at least promote - a structural, sustainable and systemic transformation of the European university system. This is clearly a highly ambitious aim, which no university, no alliance and no national authority can achieve alone. Hence the importance for the Initiative and also for the sector to promote collective cooperative approaches to the overall aim, but also to lower-level specific sub-aims or objectives. Arqus believes that the Initiative as a whole has been extremely successful in promoting an unprecedent broadly cooperative environment within the European higher education sector, which is conducive to change, although considerably more time will be needed for actual reform to take place in a convergent manner and for the fruits to be evident to all.

Arqus has taken its role as part of this cooperative ecosystem very seriously from the outset, and has participated very actively at multiple levels in the many ongoing policy debates beyond the Alliance itself. This deliverable describes that input, which takes multiple forms, at different levels, points to policy (position) papers, including many presented orally at multiple policy events. The lists are not exhaustive, but illustrate clearly the immense policy and advocacy work undertaken by different members of the Alliance. As official external representation of the Alliance lies with the Coordinator and, in her absence, the Secretary General, it is logical to see that they are the most active individual representatives of Arqus in external events. Presentations made at these events are available on the Arqus intranet upon request. Mention will not be made here of internal Arqus recommendations and policy discussions, which are detailed in D14.4.

1. EUROPEAN LEVEL POLICY DISCUSSIONS

From the outset of the EUI, the Initiative has drawn considerable attention from policy-makers at European level, some enthusiastic about the potential brought to the higher education sector and beyond by this ambitious new programme, others unrealistically impatient to see immediate results, others openly skeptical about the truly transformational potential. Fears have been expressed that the EUI could lead to a two-tier higher education sector, probably ignoring the fact that the sector is already tremendously diverse in nature, in quality, and in opportunities. Arqus has been a strong defender of the Initiative, and to that end has participated very actively at European level in multiple policy discussions.

1.1. FOREU4ALL

Arqus joined the informal network “FOR-EU” in its early days, strongly aware of the need to share experiences, challenges and solutions with others embarking on a pioneering adventure. It was thus very natural for Arqus to become one of the full partners of the FOREU4ALL Community of Practice when the call was launched in 2023. As Arqus does not (yet) have an instrumental legal entity, the Alliance is represented by the coordinating university, the University of Granada. As a full partner, it participates in Work Packages 2 and 3, as a member of the respective Boards, and has thus been instrumental in the approach designed for the 20 Topical Groups and for the FOREU4ALL Policy Dialogue activities. It has been represented on both Boards by the Alliance Coordinator, Dorothy Kelly, and by our successive Secretaries General, previously Fernando Galán and currently Paloma Fernández.

Dorothy Kelly, our Alliance Coordinator, was elected to the first FOREU4ALL Forum Board in January 2025, and re-elected in January 2026. The Coordinating Team participates actively also in the General Forum. Arqus has delegates participating in all 20 FOREU4ALL Topical Groups and has articulated an internal system whereby all policy discussions are shared in a timely fashion with those working in relevant areas within the Arqus community.

Arqus, represented by Vice-Rector Massimiliano Zattin of the University of Padua, leads a sub-group on collaborative research in the Research & Innovation Topical Group.

Arqus participated actively in the I FOREU4ALL Workshop on the European Degree (label) in Venice in December 2025. Ulrike Krawagna (University of Graz and member of the Joint Educational Offer Working Group) moderated a panel on Quality Assurance aspects of the implementation of the ED and also submitted a poster on the Arqus Approach to the development of joint degree programmes. Unfortunately, the Coordinator, Dorothy Kelly, who was to have been a panellist was unable to attend for serious personal reasons.

Arqus hosted the II FOREU4ALL Workshop on "Aligning Impact and Project Management" in Granada on 16 and 17 April 2026, and contributed speakers to several of the sessions:

- Andreas Raggautz (Graz, co-lead Development Unit) and Teresa Muñoz (Arqus Data Officer) presented a poster on the Arqus information system, Arqus in Numbers and the Strategic Dashboard.
- Marina Fernández-Peña (Arqus Communications Director) led the session 'The Power of Storytelling: Reporting and Communicating our Alliance Achievements' as an instrument to showcase impact.

Similarly, Arqus participated in the III Workshop on Community Engagement in Alliances, through the attendance of Marina Fernández-Peña.

At the same time, Arqus has contributed actively to common FOREU4ALL positions, such as the "FOREU4ALL Discussion Paper | European Universities Alliances: Beating Heart of Europe's Future" and has represented the FOREU4ALL Board in conversations with DG-EAC, for example on refining the definitions of mobility and the adjustment of mobility targets for the EUI.

1.2. Policy discussions with the European institutions

Arqus has maintained contact with European institutions, offering input on policy issues and responding to requests for information, clarification or recommendations on a regular basis.

Meetings have been held on various occasions between 2022 and 2026 with members of the European Parliament CULT and ITRE Committees and their offices on the future and sustainability of the EUI in general. Meetings have been held in Brussels and on-line with MEPs Laurence Farreng, Lina Gálvez and Marcos Ros. The Coordinator was invited to participate in a specific audience with the CULT Committee, contributing, inter alia, to the CULT Committee Report on a new vision for the European Universities alliances (2025/2036(INI)) led by MEP Laurence Farreng as Rapporteur.

Frequent meetings have also been held with members of DG-EAC to give input and comment on developments of the EUI. Arqus has contributed to policy discussions during Coordinators' events and retreats organised annually by DG-EAC, moderating and speaking on panels on several occasions (see below). Similarly, Arqus Rectors have participated in all the high-level Rectors' events organised by DG-EAC during this period, with active input on panels.

- Rector Pilar Aranda represented Arqus at the 30th January 2023 Rectors' meeting in Brussels.
- Rector Rui Vieira de Castro (Minho) and President Eeva Leinonen (Maynooth) participated in the closed Rectors' sessions at the "Shaping the future: European Universities alliances for a competitive Europe" on 26th February 2025 in Brussels. On the second day of the event (27th February) Dorothy Kelly, the Arqus coordinator, was a speaker on the panel "Outlook of the future investment pathway for European Universities", Vice-Rector Patrycja Matusz (Wrocław) was rapporteur and panel member for the session on how can the alliances support the progress towards a European Degree. Diana Radoi, a student on the Arqus Joint Master's Programme in European Studies spoke on the panel on student perspective and engagement, enhancing inclusiveness, democratic representation and mobility in the European inter-university campus. And Fernando Galán, Arqus Secretary General was rapporteur of the session devoted to the role of the European Universities alliances as powerhouses for developing the skills for the future.
- President Eeva Leinonen of Maynooth University spoke at the first high-level Round Table on the European Education Area and the modernisation of higher education at the European Universities Rectors & Presidents High-level meeting on 10 June 2026, attended also by Rector Pedro Mercado (Granada).

1.3. EUI FORUMS – PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EU EVENTS

Arqus has not only attended all four EUI Forums organised as Presidency events to date but has played a very active role in the last three of them, all held during the Arqus II funding period.

II EUI Forum (Spanish presidency): the Coordinator was moderator of Thematic Session I, 'European Degree label: main objectives and added value of pilot projects', held in Barcelona on 14th September 2023 with the participation of the then Head of Unit responsible for the EUI, Vanessa Debiais-Sainton. The Secretary-General was a panellist in the session on the monitoring framework for the European Universities. The event was also attended by Rector Rui Vieira de Castro (Minho), Rector Pedro Mercado (Granada) and Vice-Rector Patrycja Matusz (Wrocław).

III EUI Forum (Polish presidency). The Vice-Rector of the University of Wrocław, Prof. Patrycja Matusz, was appointed Plenipotentiary for the Polish Ministry of Science for all matters linked to higher education and research during the Polish presidency. As such she led multiple policy discussions at European level on many issues, with special emphasis on the Commission's Higher Education Package and the European Degree (Label) in particular, thus contributing to the approval of the Council Resolution of 22nd May 2025 instituting the European Degree Label potentially as a first step on the way towards a European degree following the pilot period of the Label.
Similarly, Prof. Matusz and her University hosted the III EUI Forum on 12-13 June 2025. She spoke at the opening and moderated the session "The future of European Universities Initiative – paving the way towards sustainable funding". At the meeting, the Arqus Coordinator, Dorothy Kelly, moderated Session 1 "The impact of European Universities alliances and best practices in tackling shared challenges". Finally, Fernando Galán, Arqus General Secretary, moderated the parallel session "Students in the centre of EUI". Prof. Matusz led the drafting of the Conclusions published following the event. More news available at: https://uwr.edu.pl/en/european-university-alliances-forum-at-the-university-of-wroclaw-report/

IV EUI Forum (Irish presidency). At the request of the Irish Department for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, NUI Maynooth University hosted the IV EUI Forum under the theme "Walls That Stand, Scaffolding that Supports: The Future of European University Alliances" on 10 July 2026. The local Arqus Coordinator, Ben Finnegan, headed the Local Organising Committee for the event along with colleagues from all Irish Universities participating in Alliances. At the event, the President of

Maynooth University spoke at both opening and closing sessions, and the Coordinator moderated the first plenary panel: 'The State of the Alliances A review of the initiative at its midway point: achievements to date, persistent challenges, and the trajectory for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)', with participation of the FOREU4ALL Chair, the Chair of the Coimbra Group, the President of the EUA and the Vice-President of ESU. The local organising team is currently finalising the draft text of the conclusions of the event under the same title as the conference itself.

1.4. European Degree (Label) – Design and implementation

At European level (see also national level in Section 2 below), alongside the leadership of higher education and research policy discussions during the Polish Presidency, Arqus has been extremely active in general in contributing to the policy discussions around the design and implementation of the European Degree (Label).

The Alliance coordinated the EDLab policy experimentation project, in which three other alliances (ENLIGHT, EUTOPIA and SEA-EU) came together with Arqus to analyse obstacles and make recommendations for the implementation of the European Degree and the Label as a first step. Major findings and conclusions are available on the EDLab website (https://www.ed-lab.eu/). *NB this project received separate funding from the EACEA for its specific tasks. It is reported here as an important driver of Arqus policy input, but was not funded by Arqus II as such.*

This high level of involvement has led to much Arqus contribution at European level to policy development, including the Arqus Position Paper on the European Degree, D06.2 of this Arqus II project available at: https://arqus-alliance.eu/news/arqus-position-paper-european-degree/. It has also led to the Arqus team presenting papers at numerous policy events at European level. Examples are:

Ulrike Krawagna (Universty of Graz) was a member of the organising committee and moderated a panel on quality assurance of joint programmes at the 1st FOREU4ALL Workshop 'Towards the European Degree' held at Ca'Foscari University (Venice) in December 2025. She also submitted the poster 'Advancing Joint Programme Implementation: The Arqus Path to the European Degree Label' to the same event.

The Coordinator of Arqus, Dorothy Kelly, was a speaker at Polish Presidency Workshops on the European Degree, held in Brussels on 15-16 January 2025, for Permanent Representatives for Higher Education and again on-line on 28 January 2025.

Similarly, she and other Arqus members have been invited to present papers at the following events organised by other alliances at European level (EC2U, UNITA, CIVIS and INGENIUM):

- 'The future of the European Degree: our European Alliance perspective', European Degree Workshop, University of Pavia, Italy, 21 January 2025
  Arqus speaker: Mara Thiene (Padua)
- 'European degree: a new solution for an old problem', at the UNITA WEEK, Universidad Pública de Navarra, Pamplona 25 – 28 February 2025
  Arqus speaker: Dorothy Kelly (Coordinator)
- 'Advancing Joint Programme Implementation: The Arqus Path to the European Degree Label' at the UNITA-CIVIS Joint event 'Towards the European degree: Exploring Pathways through Joint Labels, Best Practices and Policy Innovation', Brussels, 27 November 2025
  Arqus speaker: Dorothy Kelly (Coordinator)
- 'Arqus experience in joint programme development, the European Degree'. 10 Days in INGENIUM, University of Oviedo, 17-21 February 2025
  Arqus speaker: Dorothy Kelly (Coordinator)

The former Secretary General of Arqus (until August 2025), Fernando Galán, was appointed as a member of the European Degree Advisory Board in the summer of 2025, alongside the fellow lead in EDLab, Laura Howard, former Director General of the SEA-EU Alliance.

1.5. Contributions to policy discussions with other European associations and sector stakeholders

Arqus members have contributed on a regular basis to policy discussions at events organised by stakeholder organisations within the European higher education sector such as the Coimbra Group, the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), the European Association for International Education (EAIE), or training events (TCAs) organised jointly by Erasmus+ agencies at European level. The following are illustrative examples:

COIMBRA GROUP

As the oldest of the "traditional" university networks at European level, with the vast majority of its 42 members participating in eight different European University Alliances, the Coimbra Group has devoted time and effort to following the initiative, its successes and its challenges. The Coimbra Group has organised since 2020 bespoke open public policy panels on different aspects of the Initiative at its annual conferences. Arqus has participated in all of these; in particular, these are the four held during the Arqus II funding period:

- Cologne, 1 June 2023. Open Session on the European Universities Alliances: Global dimension (Dorothy Kelly as panellist in representation of Arqus)
- Turku, 6 June 2024. Open Session on the European Universities Alliances: 'Synergies between education and research: what can we learn from the Alliances?' (Dorothy Kelly as panellist in representation of Arqus)
- Bologna, 11 June 2025. Open Session on the European Universities Alliances: 'How to Handle the Social Responsibility with the Alliances?' (Artur Schmitt as panellist in representation of Arqus)
- Granada, 18 June 2026. Best Practices from European University Alliances: 'Research & Innovation for Territorial Transformation' (Dorothy Kelly as panellist in representation of Arqus)

ACADEMIC COOPERATION ASSOCIATION

The Academic Cooperation Association is an important policy player at European level, bringing together the voices of the national agencies for internationalisation. At its regular annual event 'What's New in Brussels', it regularly includes a policy session devoted to the EUI.

At the 2025 edition Dorothy Kelly was invited to speak at the Plenary Session 'Deep transnational cooperation and innovation: impact and sustainability'.

Similarly, Kamila Kaminska (Wroclaw) was a panellist at the session 'Higher Education Cooperation with Ukraine'.

TCA – DAAD

The Coordinator, Dorothy Kelly, was invited to speak on innovative mobility at the TCA organized by the DAAD 'European Universities as role models: Putting it into practice: Spreading innovative results from European Universities alliances to other HEIs', held on 20-22 October 2025 in Bonn, Germany.

EAIE

For some years now, the European Association for International Education has offered an important policy and practice exchange forum for the European University Alliances. Arqus has contributed to the policy debate at different editions of the conference:

- Special side event hosted by the Université de Toulouse and la Région Occitanie on September 17 2024 'Internationalisation of European Universities Alliances: the new frontiers'.
  Arqus speaker: Dorothy Kelly (Coordinator) was moderator of the first plenary session on 'Strategies and approaches: how alliances can forge successful international connections'.
- 'Connecting education and research: How European Universities Initiative alliances are contributing to bridging the gap' (Joint session with EUTOPIA)
  EAIE Annual Conference September 2024 Toulouse
  Arqus speaker: Dorothy Kelly (Coordinator)
- Panel session "Blueprint for a European degree", together with Rita Dias (Erasmus Student Network) and Tine Delva (European Commission)
  EAIE Annual Conference September 2024 Toulouse
  Arqus speaker: Dorothy Kelly (Coordinator)
- Panel session "European Degree", together with Yann-Maël Bideau (European Commission) and Laura Howard (SEA-EU)
  EAIE Annual Conference September 2025 Gothenburg
  Arqus speaker: Guadalupe Soriano (Granada)
- Workshop "Europe to the world: Rethinking joint programmes from a global perspective" (With Mirko Varano, Tecnologico De Monterrey – ITESM, Mexico)
  EAIE Annual Conference September 2026 Glasgow
  Arqus speaker: Samira Bonucci (Padua)
- 'Green mobility'
  A poster at the EAIE Annual Conference September 2026 Glasgow
  Arqus participant : Ninon Böhme (Leipzig)

PRIDE

PRIDE is an association of professionals dedicated to the furtherance and enhancement of doctoral education at European level. The association organises an annual conference and an annual summer school, known as the PRIDE Masterclass. The Coordinator was invited to participate in both events in 2025, as they were devoted to the role of the European University Alliances in doctoral education:

- 'The doctoral cycle – a key pillar for the Arqus Alliance', PRIDE Network Annual Conference, London, 9-10 April 2025
- 'Internationalization in Focus: Strategies, Challenges, Opportunities, and the Role of Doctoral Education', at PRIDE Masterclass 'Enhance International Doctoral Collaborations: Navigating Complexities, Fostering Excellence', Dubrovnik, 31 August – 3 September 2025

EQAR

EQAR has been an important stakeholder in the entire policy debate around joint educational offer, including the EDLab project and other events around the European Degree (Label).

The EQAR Members' Dialogue was held at the University of Granada in November 2023. During this event the Arqus Secretary General participated in the session "Knowledge Café", giving participants an opportunity to learn about specific developments, initiatives and case studies related to quality assurance

in the European Higher Education Area and Bologna Process (EHEA) among governments on issues related to quality assurance.

At the 2025 edition of the EQAR members dialogue, Brussels, October 15-16, Ulrike Krawagna participated in a panel session on the European Degree.

Erasmus Student Network

ESN has been an important student partner for Arqus at local institutional, national and European levels.

Amongst many other informal exchanges, Arqus Secretary General Fernando Galán participated in the Erasmus Generation Meeting from 4 to 7 April 2024 in Seville, Spain, in the session 'On the pathway to the European Degree' with Yann-Maël Bideau of the European Commission.

European University Association EUA

Rector Pedro Arezes (UMinho) was a speaker at the EUA Annual Conference in Istanbul (Turkey) in April 2026, addressing a plenary session on European University Alliances, on leadership and the future of international cooperation. The session also featured the Rector of the University of Iceland, Silja Ómarsdóttir, and was moderated by the EUA Secretary-General, Amanda Crowfoot.

1.6. Contributions to policy discussions in other European university alliances

Arqus has been very active in collaborative policy discussions not only at general European level through FOREU4ALL and the EUI Forums, but also at the level of cooperation with individual alliances. Alongside those mentioned in 1.4 above specifically about the European Degree, another example of input to their policy discussions are the following:

- Plenary Panel 'The Role of Higher Education Strengthening Europe's Competitiveness' at CIVICA Global Forum, 'Leveraging Social Sciences in Higher Education: Navigating Global Challenges and Complexities', IE University, Madrid – 6 & 7 May 2025

Arqus also contributes through membership of the **External or International Advisory Boards** of other Alliances:

- External Advisory Board – Eunice alliance (Dorothy Kelly)
- External Advisory Board – INGENIUM (Dorothy Kelly)
- External Peer Consultation – UNITE! (Dorothy Kelly)

2. National level policy discussions

Arqus universities are all research-intensive universities with strong local engagement. As leading institutions in their national and regional contexts they are extremely well placed to participate and give input to policy debates on all issues affecting the higher education sector. Many of them already play a leading role in sector policy advocacy through Rectors' Conferences and other university groupings (such as the U-10 in France). This has given Arqus also a significant role at the national and regional policy discussion levels in our nine (eleven) countries. This section addresses in the first instance the national networks of universities participating in the EUI which have sprung up over the first years of the Initiative, mostly due to the fact that much important regulatory reform must take place at national or regional (Germany, Spain) level. These networks have also played important roles in (1) advocacy for national top-up funding and its conditions and (2) spreading the impact of the EUI at systemic level beyond the

universities actually participating directly. Arqus has been present and active in all these issues, as described briefly below.

Section 2.2 addresses individual Arqus university engagement with other alliances and individual universities. Section 2.3 addresses official events, often organised by Embassies and other diplomatic representations in which Arqus universities have participated individually or jointly.

2.1. NATIONAL AND REGIONAL NETWORKS OF UNIVERSITIES IN ALLIANCES

2.1.1 AUSTRIA

The University of Graz participates in the national network of Austrian universities in the EUI, the Networking & Advisory Group European Universities Initiative Austria. The Group is organised by the Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research Republic of Austria, and meets regularly in online, hybrid or in-person meetings approximately 4 times a year.

Topics covered include: current developments in the European Higher Education Area; dialogue with the OeAD National Agency for Education and Internationalisation; nformation from European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA); regulatory reform; mobility; Joint Programmes / European Degree

Also, Ulrike Krawagna is a member of the Begleitgruppe European Degree, the national advisory group on the European Degree, advising the Austrian Ministry on regulatory reform in the area.

2.1.2 FRANCE

Lyon 1 University is a founding member of the national network of French universities in the EUI, coordinated by France Universités. As such it has participated actively in regular meetings and national initiatives. The group has been especially active in policy discussions around national top-up funding, sustainability of alliances, the European Degree (Label), and student participation.

Lyon 1 University is also active at regional level in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, where the region has seven universities involved in the EUI. Regional authorities have been supportive of mobility programmes, and Lyon 1 has participated actively in discussions around innovative mobility, in its role as co-lead of the Arqus Working Group on the issue. The regional authorities for Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (France) invited Arqus to speak at their event ‘Soirée régionale “Mobilité des étudiants à l’international”, including special reference to Alliances on 4 June 2026.

2.1.3 GERMANY

Leipzig University is an active member and participant of the accompanying national initiative for German higher education institutions in the context of the EU call for “European Universities”, EUN. As such, Arqus representatives have participated in regular online meetings (EUN forums) on specific alliance topics, with special emphasis on national support through the DAAD.

2.1.4 IRELAND

Maynooth University representatives are very active in the National EUI Forum Ireland, organised by the Irish Higher Education Institutes involved in European Alliances in close coordination with the Irish Universities Association and the Irish Technological Universities Associations. It has been running for over three years, meets 4-5 times a year, each hosted in-person at a different HEI. Representatives of the Irish Higher Education Authority always attend and members of the Irish Ministry for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science occasionally attend. A central outcome of this group has

been the joint hosting at Maynooth of the IV EUI Forum under the aegis of the Irish presidency. Current discussion centre on national top-up funding for alliances.

2.1.5 ITALY

The University of Padua is a leading member of the Italian network Rete Alleanze Italia and has participated in the over 20 meetings held to date, dealing with numerous issues such as national top-up funding, joint degree programme accreditation, student participation. The network is informal and bottom-up, established in 2023, with shared management among participants. Forty Alliances are currently represented. Regular monthly online meetings plus one in-presence meeting are held per year. The Network is in dialogue with relevant actors in the field of HE at the national level. It works with four topical groups: Microcredentials; Legal Entity; Grant Offices; Professional Staff Development.
Following Arqus coordination of the EDLab project, the University of Padua has also played a leading role in the promotion of the European Degree within Italy. In particular, on 9-10 April 2024, the University organised an Italian national event, with participation of the European Commission, the Italian Ministry for Higher Education, the Italian QAA Anvur, and a large number of Italian universities. A second follow-up event is planned for January 2027.

2.1.6 LITHUANIA

Vilnius University is active in the informal network of Lithuanian universities involved in alliances, which has met regularly over the Arqus II funding period. Universities have also met with the Ministry and the Quality Assurance Agency to discuss issues relating to national support for the alliances, and QA procedures for joint programmes.
In this context, the local Arqus institutional coordinator, Julija Savickė, also a member of the Task Force which designed the reform of the Arqus governance structures, presented the Arqus approach to long-term sustainable alliance governance in Kaunas on 5th June 2025: “Managing the alliance, not the project: Arqus experience“.
An interesting outshoot of Arqus student participation is the fact that the former president of the Vilnius University Student Association, Neda Žutautaitė, is currently the officer responsible for supporting alliances at the national Lithuanian Ministry.

2.1.7 POLAND

As described in 1.3 above, the Vice-Rector of the University of Wrocław, Prof. Patrycja Matusz, was appointed Plenipotentiary for the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education for all matters linked to higher education and research during the Polish presidency. As such she led multiple policy discussions at national level on many issues. She is also the Chair of the network of EUI Alliances under the aegis of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.
The Coordinator was invited to be keynote speaker at the national event of the network with the address ‘Universities without borders: the transformative power of European University Alliances as a new form of internationalization’, at the 2nd Conference on European Universities Initiative, Kraków, 4th – 5th September 2024.

2.1.8 PORTUGAL

UMinho is a founding member of the Forum of Portuguese Institutions in European Alliances, and participates actively in its meetings and advocacy activities with Portuguese national authorities and agencies. An example of this is the presentation by Vice-Rector Manuel João Costa on behalf of the Forum in a panel on the involvement of students in the Alliances movement, focusing on the challenges that association leaders face in making these initiatives work, at the FAIRe (Forum of the Academic Federation for Information and External Representation) at the University of Aveiro in October 2024.

UMinho also hosted the national EDLab seminar on the European Degree in the same month. Magda Pinheiro presented the European Commission's proposal and the results of the EDLab project, in which the University of Minho participated as an Arqus member, along with the University of Algarve (a member of SEA.EU Alliance) and the New University of Lisbon (a member of EUTOPIA Alliance). In addition, Professor Henrique Santos recounted the journey of creating the Master's Programme in International Cybersecurity and Cyberintelligence under the umbrella of Arqus.

2.1.9 SPAIN

The Spanish universities participating in the EUI set up an informal group in 2019 to share experiences and challenges and as a channel for policy discussions with national authorities, on whom many legislative reforms needed to eliminate barriers to seamless cooperation depend. This informal group has grown over the years as a large number of Spanish universities have joined the EUI, up to a total of 57 universities in 54 funded alliances with a further 6 in Seal of Excellence holders. It was decided collectively to formalise further the group in October 2024, when the Universidades Españolas en Universidades Europeas (UEUE) group was formally adopted by all universities involved. The Coordinator of Arqus is the first President of the network (January 2025-January 2027), thus reinforcing Arqus leadership at national Spanish level. The group has held regular meetings with the Ministry for Science, Universities and Innovation (MCIU), the 11 Spanish national and regional QAAs belonging to EQAR through their national network (REACU), the Erasmus+ Agency (SEPIE), student organisations (CREUP), and the Spanish Rectors' Conference (CRUE). UEUE organises an annual Forum, the first of which was held in Madrid (Universidad Rey Juan Carlos) on 12 -13 November 2025.

As the occupant of the presidency, Arqus has participated in a leading role in all national level policy discussions, including: European Degree Label, joint programme regulation, the issuing of joint degree parchments, regional regulations limiting the facilities granted under central national legislation for the evaluation and accreditation of joint degrees, national top-up funding for alliances, amongst others.

The network has fluent links with the Spanish Rectors' Conference, which has invited the Chair (the Arqus Coordinator) to speak at numerous national events, including:

- 'Mesa redonda IV: Títulos conjuntos internacionales: colaboración docente en Europa', CRUE Docencia, Plenary meeting of Sectoral Committee (Vice-Rectors for Study Programmes), Universidad Pública de Navarra, Pamplona 19 – 20 June 2025
- 'La Iniciativa de Universidades Europeas como motor de la cooperación académica en forma de titulaciones conjuntas: cuestiones de acceso y admisión', CRUE Sectoral Committee on Student Affairs, Madrid, Universidad Complutense, October 2025
- 'Formación permanente sin fronteras: Internacionalización y alianzas europeas', Round Table Spanish National Network for Continuing Education (RUEPEP), Granada, 27th March 2026
- 'Los títulos conjuntos internacionales como instrumento de internacionalización: retos actuales y perspectivas de futuro', Seminar Spanish Rectors' Conference (CRUE) Sectoral Committee on study programmes, Universidad de Extremadura, Cáceres, 29th April 2026

Of special significance is the following seminar, organised directly by the Rectors' Conference and attended by a large number of university rectors:

- 'Gobernanza, incentivos y sostenibilidad de las alianzas europeas', Keynote address, at the Rectors' Seminar 'Universidades en Alianza', organised by Spanish Rectors' Conference (CRUE), Santander 3-4 September 2026.

Similarly, the Arqus Coordinator was invited to speak at the plenary session of the Spanish Association of Student Representatives at Public Universities (CREUP) event 'I Foro de Estudiantes y Alianzas Europeas', held at the Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Toledo, 23-24 September 2025.

Alongside the national level, Arqus has been very active at regional level, establishing together with the University of Cadiz (Coordinating institution of SEA-EU) in 2019 a regular channel for joint advocacy and sharing of experiences, challenges and solutions in Andalusia. This has now grown to include all Andalusian public universities, five of which coordinate alliances, with the other four as participating institutions. As much responsibility for higher education (funding and additional regulatory frameworks) is devolved to the autonomous communities in Spain, this regional group is important, and has mediated to solve issues regarding joint degree programmes (especially access and admission for students).

Before the formalisation of the new UEUE structure, Arqus led the organisation of a national Spanish event on the European Degree Package and held at the Polytechnic University of Madrid (UPM), on 30th September 2024. The Arqus Coordinator chaired the event, and participated with policy input and the drafting of recommendations for implementation at national level.

2.1.10 UNITED KINGDOM

Durham University, our associate partner in the UK participates actively in the UK European University Alliances Network (UUK International) composed of UK universities participating in European University Alliances, where they collaborate through a UUKi-supported network to share practice, inform policy, and strengthen UK engagement in the European Universities Initiative. It is an informal network initiated by Universities of Edinburgh (Una Europa) and Warwick (Eutopia). It meets approximately four times per year to exchange experience, share good practice and discuss Alliance developments. It provides a forum to monitor UK-EU policy developments, including the future UK relationship with Erasmus+ and from September 2026, will formally sit within the Universities UK International (UUKi) Global Mobility Network The network supports collective evidence-gathering and advocacy on the value of European University Alliances for education, research and innovation.
Current priorities include:

- Sustaining institutional engagement during the transition period
- Preparing for the next Erasmus+ programme cycle
- Maximising opportunities for staff mobility, partnership development and wider Alliance participation

2.2. ARQUS AS A ROLE MODEL - SUPPORT FOR OTHER ALLIANCES AND INDIVIDUAL UNIVERSITIES

The Alliances have been tasked with acting as a role model for (1) other alliances through the sharing of best practice and policy challenges and solutions and (2) universities not (yet) participating in the EUI.

Arqus, through its Coordinator and other members, has been active in both roles. Examples are:

- The presentation of the European Degree (Label) at the University of Cadiz, 24th March 2025
- The presentation ‘Alianzas de Universidades Europeas : valor añadido de la iniciativa’, a lecture given to the rectoral team at the Universidad Pablo de Olavide (Seville) in December 2025. At the time the university was not participating in the EUI but has since joined Epicur.
- The presentation ‘Alianza Arqus: Presentación general, valor añadido y retos’ to the strategic committee and governing council of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) on 25 September 2024, following their success in obtaining funding in the 2024 call for alliances as coordinating institution.
- Fernando Galán, Arqus Secretary-General, and Marina Fernández-Peña Mollá, Arqus Communications Director, were invited to EU GREEN Alliance’s Executive Committee and Communication meetings to share their inputs and showcase the experience in Arqus. 9-11 April 2024, Jarandilla de la Vera (Spain)
- Two members of the Arqus UMinho team took part in an inter-alliance meeting held as part of the UNIgreen International Conference in February 2026 in Coimbra. A dedicated segment of the workshop featured contributions from other European University alliances, including Arqus and

EUTOPIA, both of which include Portuguese partner institutions. These presentations offered valuable external perspectives on mobility governance, organisational models and innovative practices, fostering inter-alliance dialogue and mutual learning.

The Alliance has also attended numerous individual consultations from universities seeking to join the EUI, or as newcomers to the Initiative.

2.3. Embassy and other official policy events

Arqus has been requested to participate in Embassy events on bi- or tri-lateral cooperation within Alliances on several occasions. Examples are:

- Panel discussion 'Opportunities and Challenges in Franco-German-Irish Collaboration' at the event 'Towards a Stronger Europe: Franco-German-Irish Perspectives on the Future of European University Alliances, 27 May 2025, Europe House, Dublin. Organised by the French and German Embassies in Ireland with the Irish Ministry for Higher Education and Science. Vice President Gemma Irvine of Maynooth University and the Coordinator were both speakers.
- Participation in the French-German conference on European Universities Alliances, 16th June 2025
- Italian and French Universities in the European Universities initative co-organised by the Italo-French University and the French Embassy in Italy, 30th March 2023
- Journée franco-espagnole Universités Européennes, Madrid, 22nd May 2023

3. Global dimension - Input to the policy debates surrounding the EUI beyond Europe

Although we are aware that the global dimension is not funded under the current Erasmus+ project, Arqus has, like many other alliances, participated in policy discussions surrounding the potential of the EUI for greater global attractiveness of the European higher education system. Thus, the alliance has presented papers at the following global dimension events:

- Presentation of Arqus at the Coimbra Group – Montevideo Group joint seminar on the EUI, Universidad de la República, Montevideo, Uruguay, December 2022.
  Arqus participants: Rector Pilar Aranda, Coordinator Dorothy Kelly
- Presentation of the Arqus Global Dimension at the session 'The global dimension of the European University Alliances: opportunities for the Mediterranean partners', Unimed Annual Conference, Granada, 15-16 March 2023
  Arqus participants: Steering Committee member Ignacio Blanco, Consortium Manager Fernando Galán, Coordinator Dorothy Kelly
- Presentation of opportunities for cooperation with Ukrainian universities at the 'Arqus for Ukraine' event at the University of Wrocław, April 2023
  Arqus participants: Vice-Rector Patrycja Matusz and local Arqus team at the University of Wrocław, Steering Committee member Tabea Mager (University of Leipzig), Larysa Chovnyuk (Associate partner National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy), Coordinator Dorothy Kelly
- Technical Assistance Missions (Joint Programme Workshop) in the frame of the SPHERE project (presentations included best practice examples of Arqus JP development):
  - Yerevan, Armenia with participation of Ukrainian institutions, (online): April 25-26, 2024
  - Algiers, Algeria: May 20-21, 2024
  - Jordan (online): October 20 - 21, 2024
  - Georgia (online): December 27, 2024, online
  - Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (with participation of institutions from
  - Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan): April 23-24, 2025

- Presentation at the 4th KAA Annual Conference. Internal Quality Assurance at Higher Education Institutions: From Evaluation to Quality Culture. Pristina, Kosovo, 29th September 2026
  Arqus participant: Ulrike Krawagna (Graz)

4. POLICY AND POSITION PAPERS PUBLISHED OR ENDORSED BY ARQUS

Alongside the intense policy activity described above, Arqus has published policy or position papers, and endorsed those produced by other alliances on a wide range of issues. The following is a non-exhaustive list of those produced internally, and those produced externally (with or without Arqus input) and endorsed formally by Arqus or Arqus partners.

- Best practices sharing report (D01.4)
- Recommendations for authorities on elimination of obstacles for joint calls. (D13.3)
- Arqus Position on the European Degree (D06.2)
- 'Challenges faced by the European Universities Initiative in the light of the experience of the Arqus alliance since 2019: recommendations to enhance the future of the initiative and reinforce its sustainability'
- Considerations on the European Degree (Label) from the EDLab project (Joint paper with SEA-EU, ENLIGHT and EUTOPIA)
- Recomendaciones de EDLab en relación con la implantación del (sello de) título europeo en España (Joint paper with SEA-EU, ENLIGHT and EUTOPIA)
- Students' Peace Declaration, commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement (EUPeace)
- Joint Statement in Support of the European Universities Alliances (UNITA) (signed at individual university level)

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