

## **Follow-up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution on 'A new vision for the European Universities alliances'**

- 1. Rapporteur:** Laurence FARRENG (RENEW / FR)
- 2. References:** 2025/2036(INI) / A10-0135/2025 / P10\_TA(2025)0196
- 3. Date of adoption of the resolution:** 11 September 2025
- 4. Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Culture and Education (CULT)
- 5. Brief analysis/ assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

**The report is highly positive and supportive of the European Universities alliances.** It underlines the key role of the alliances for the EU's competitiveness and for enhancing the links between education, research, innovation and the private sector, reducing fragmentation of the sector and contributing to a more balanced talent circulation across the EU's territory. The report also welcomes the Union of Skills, specifically outlining that 'alliances must be closely aligned with the labour market to address Europe's skills shortages and competitiveness challenges' and welcoming the intention to deliver a 'future investment pathway and a clear legal status for alliances'. The report calls for strong support for the alliances under the next multiannual financial framework (MFF) with an 'investment strategy' and acknowledges the importance of continued support for the alliances under Erasmus+ programme, complemented by other EU funds and supported by national funding for the alliances. The strategic vision for the alliances has to be reflected in the next MFF, and future calls should secure the continuation of the alliances. The report also calls specifically for moving from the current 'project-based' approach for the funding of the alliances towards a more sustainable funding approach reflecting the alliances' long-term strategic vision. The report invites the Commission 'to study the viability of creating a tailor-made solution for financing the European Universities alliances in the post-2027 multiannual financial framework, with the possibility of creating a separate programme'. The report raises concerns about the lack of sustainable support for the research and innovation dimension of the alliances and encourages synergies with other EU programmes and support at national level. The report also calls on the Commission 'to consider adding criteria to possible future calls, in line with topics linked to European strategic autonomy and competitiveness, such as energy, resilience, energy, climate change, the digital transition and digital skills, and defence'.

- 6. Response to requests and overview of actions taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:**

The European Commission would like to thank the European Parliament

for the resolution of 11 September 2025 on a new vision for the European Universities alliances. The European Commission fully shares the European Parliament's keen appreciation of the alliances' key role in further developing an integrated, competitive and inclusive European Education Area, supporting Europe's competitiveness, innovation capacity, ability to attract global talent, contributing to EU sovereignty in key strategic sectors, social cohesion and upholding fundamental EU values. The 65 European Universities alliances bring together more than 570 higher education institutions across Europe. They are key to providing the talent and future-ready skills Europe and its economy need, in line with the Union of Skills. They help strengthen the links between education, research, innovation and the private sector. The alliances allow all regions, and all types of higher education institutions, to contribute to, and benefit from, European cooperation, reinforce higher education capacity, and reduce brain drain, demonstrating that they can foster excellence in education, research and innovation in all parts of Europe.

In the next MFF, the Commission aims to strengthen and scale up the impact of the European Universities, reflecting their strategic importance and maximising their potential. The European Parliament's role is crucial for securing the proposed stronger Erasmus+ programme in the ongoing MFF negotiations, to be able to provide attractive opportunities for the European higher education system in all its diversity, including the European Universities alliances. Continued support of the European Parliament is critical to build an investment pathway for the alliances, offering them sustainable and predictable funding to reach their full potential to deliver world-class education and research.

## Point 12

The Commission acknowledges that the progress in reaching the highly ambitious 50% mobility target within the alliances takes time. This situation stems from an interplay of diverse factors such as time needed to embed mobility in existing programmes, taking into account challenges in aligning academic calendars, financial constraints, the complex recognition of virtual and blended mobilities due to diverse national legislations, limited access to mobility among students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, and the lack of awareness of the innovative mobility opportunities offered by the alliances. The alliances have nevertheless significantly increased the opportunities for transnational mobility in various formats (physical, blended, virtual), while also contributing to more balanced mobility and talent circulation across the EU. Since the European Parliament expresses concerns regarding mobility targets and limited funding provisions, the Commission is asked for further adjustment of measures. Since the 50% mobility target is indicative, the Commission will work on further analysis of the underlying facts and conditions, as well as consider how new initiatives such as fostering automatic recognition of learning outcomes, establishment of the European degree, the development of

the European Student Card Initiative and other measures will boost the mobility development within the alliances and beyond. The success of these measures will also depend on the Member States' efforts to implement the Council recommendation "Europe on the Move – learning mobility opportunities for everyone", to ensure a seamless movement of learners in general.

#### Points 23 and 25

The current funding model under the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 is representing a project-based approach. The Commission is aligned with the Parliament's position regarding the need to ensure in the next MFF period the long-term sustainability of the European Universities initiative to enable the alliances to deliver on their long-term mission. In preparation of this new funding approach, the Commission just recently launched another call for the European University alliances, to ensure the funding model until the end of the current MFF period.

The Commission established two streams of evaluation processes for the alliances. One is integrated in their funding model associated to their Erasmus+ grants, evaluating the progress and development of individual alliances during their funding period. The second is a Monitoring Framework designed to assess the progress and the transformational potential of the whole initiative in line with its policy objectives. The Commission ran a first pilot of the Monitoring framework as part of the study on the 'Outcomes and transformational potential of the European Universities initiative'<sup>1</sup> published in January 2025. The Monitoring Framework will continue to be discussed with the alliances and relevant stakeholders aiming to finetune its design and to ensure that it fully captures all relevant elements for the alliances' development.

These evaluation exercises will provide useful input for the design of the future instrument supporting the alliances. A key vector of the new Erasmus+ programme will be simplification, vital to reaching our goal of having a more inclusive and accessible programme.

#### Points 24, 26, 27 and 34

For the next MFF, the Commission welcomes the European Parliament's commitment for a stronger Erasmus+ programme as a key supporting instrument for a more attractive and competitive European higher education sector, including the European Universities alliances and other actions supported by Partnerships of Excellence and Innovation under Erasmus+. The Commission shares the view of the Parliament recognising the relevance of the European Universities initiative as part of the Erasmus+ programme. The Commission proposal for the next generation Erasmus+ (2028-2034) sets the programme to remain the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/db43f6ca-da14-11ef-be2a-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

main source of support for the initiative underpinning its core education dimension. European Universities Alliances are also referenced in the proposal for the next EU Framework programme for research and innovation (Horizon Europe 2028-2034) and the newly proposed European Competitiveness Fund. Together, these Commission proposals recognise the pivotal role of European Universities Alliances to create a truly integrated internal market for knowledge, research, skills and competencies development. The Commission believes that a stronger coordination between Erasmus+, other existing EU programmes such as Horizon Europe, the European Competitiveness Fund, and national and regional funding schemes would be beneficial in view of building a strong European university ecosystem that can compete worldwide to attract and keep talent in Europe, train future-ready graduates, lifelong learners, innovators and researchers, support excellent research and innovation in strategic domains and enhance business transformation. The Commission intends to open as of 2026 a series of consultations with higher education stakeholders, alliances, Member States and the European Parliament to discuss avenues for the design of future instruments tailored to the needs of a long-term strategic implementation of the alliances.

These objectives should also be supported at policy level, by enhanced synergies between the European Education Area, the Union of Skills, and the European Research Area (ERA).

### Point 30

The Commission welcomes the European Parliament's commitment to further reinforce the internationalisation of alliances, in line with, among others, the Global Gateway strategy and talent partnerships. The Commission is aligned with this important commitment to strengthen international cooperation, as the alliances have a huge potential of making the European higher education more attractive worldwide, recruiting new talents from countries outside Europe and cooperating on the international level, for example using Erasmus Mundus. The Commission welcomes the European Parliament's continued commitment to the promotion and protection of academic freedom and the freedom of scientific research. It fully concurs with the view that academic freedom constitutes a foundational element of democratic societies and a prerequisite for excellence in education, research, and innovation within the European Union.

Participants in the Erasmus+ programme also have to adhere to the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and all higher education institutions have to have the Erasmus Charter of Higher Education (ECHE). Monitoring of the adherence to the ECHE and the respect of the Erasmus Student Charter is done by the Erasmus+ National Agencies.

### Point 34

The current 65 alliances supported under Erasmus+ work on a range of priority topics for Europe's strategic autonomy and competitiveness: for

example, 27 alliances are focusing on sustainability, 23 on digital innovation or Artificial Intelligence (AI), 10 on engineering, science and technology, while others focus on global health, demography, agriculture, food production, wellbeing, economic and regional development, gender equality, migration, human rights, civic engagement, etc. Most of the alliances champion challenge-based, trans- and interdisciplinary approaches, encompassing social sciences and humanities in their curricula, paving the way for novel ways to solve complex societal issues, anchored in our European values and supporting research- and evidence-based policy making.

This diversity has been enabled by the bottom-up approach of the Erasmus+ funding, allowing the alliances to be set up according to the profile of their partner higher education institutions, building on their strengths, in line with their institutional autonomy. This has been a key element enabling the success of the initiative.

The Commission's support for the alliances under the next MFF should leverage the alliances' capacity to deliver on the objectives of the Union of Skills and the Competitiveness Compass, including regarding strategic sectors such as AI, defence, clean technologies, semi-conductors or quantum computing, while respecting academic freedom, institutional autonomy of the higher education institutions and upholding fundamental EU values.

President von der Leyen's Political Guidelines clearly outlined the political priority to reinforce the alliances by enabling them to have stronger ties with R&I and businesses, and highlighted the key importance of delivering on the 'fifth freedom' called for by the Letta Report. The alliances should thus continue to play a key role in increasing Europe's competitiveness, supporting skills and competencies for new and better jobs and social wellbeing, contributing to sustainable growth, technological upgrading, as well as to social cohesion, strategic autonomy and security, while upholding EU values.