

Internationalisation of European Universities Alliances: new frontier, new diplomacy

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The concept of “new frontiers” could be explored in relation to the polyvalence and new challenges of the academic field. This concept invites us to rethink the structures, processes, and interactions within and beyond higher education institutions.

1. Breaking down trans-institutional barriers

New frontiers challenge us to break down traditional trans-institutional walls. Following the EUA's perspective, we envision world-class, civic universities that engage fully across institutions through innovative models of learning, unlearning, and relearning.

- **Call for action:** We must reflect on how we can redesign the practice of internationalisation in higher education, making it less institutionalised and formalised, and more focused on reconceptualising learning.
- **Example:** CIVIS has been deeply engaged in fervent dialogue to promote new ways of international collaboration, transforming institutions path to work together, along with African universities (shared research, joint programmes, international mobility, etc.).

2. Advancing the Bologna Process for globalisation and internationalisation

New frontiers require us to push the boundaries of the Bologna Process and embrace non-traditional approaches to internationalisation. Many continents have responded to the Bologna Process, and significant transformations are taking place outside Europe.

- **Call for action:** We need to foster more dynamic human involvement in the promotion of internationalisation by diversifying roles and engaging people in a

variety of academic construction, reaching both traditional and non-traditional students.

- **Example:** CIVIS has worked to promote differentiated roles in internationalisation, encouraging the engagement of academic communities across the globe, such as public institutions, companies, NGOs, civil society, and other relevant actors, through our Open Labs and more.

3. Rethinking “Erasmus frontiers” ...

New frontiers call for a reimagining of Erasmus mobility actions, especially with a focus on transcontinental mobility arrangements.

- **Call for action:** We must explore new forms of mobility, including innovative experiments that cater to both traditional and non-traditional students—this could involve embedded programs or digitally enhanced mobility opportunities.
- **Example:** CIVIS has actively promoted experimentation in new forms of student mobility, integrating digital tools and cross-border collaboration (shared mobility actions for students and staff from and to African universities). CIVIS approach on digitally enhanced mobility as UNESCO global case study for virtual learning.

4. The European Degree as a European global brand

New frontiers bring us to the potential of the European Degree (ED), marking a significant moment where this European academic brand can be taken seriously on the global stage, advocating for Europeanisation.

- **Call for action:** We must accelerate the validation process for the European Degree, not just as a formal recognition process, but as a flexible and innovative framework for new learning models (such as micro-credentials).
- **Example:** CIVIS has structured its educational and academic framework with a focus on flexibility, inclusivity, and fostering lifelong learning through innovations like micro-credentials. Also, CIVIS tested and refined the European Degree criteria through the SMARTT project.

5. “European Universities Diplomacy”

New frontiers also mean promoting a new kind of European academic diplomacy (as part of the soft diplomacy), that goes beyond European borders, involving academic, research, and civic diplomacy.

- **Call for action:** We need “to professionalise” new roles, such as global officers, who act as ambassadors for European academic and research initiatives on the global stage.
- **Example:** CIVIS has introduced the role of global officer, focused on externalising European academic and research tools, ensuring Europe's presence in the global higher education landscape, starting with a strong cooperation with the African continent. CIVIS confronts the polycrisis in Europe and Africa through research, policy, and education (“PolyCIVIS” Jean Monnet Project).

Opportunities within “(non-)traditional” European frontiers to enhance internationalisation

Even as we explore these new frontiers, there are key opportunities within traditional frameworks that can enhance the internationalisation potential of European University Alliances:

- **Policy Experimentation as a Trust-Building Tool:** One of the critical assets for advancing internationalisation is the use of policy experimentation as a foundation for reliability and trust. Various European alliances have implemented policy experiments that showcase innovation and demonstrate effectiveness. These initiatives build confidence in the capacity of alliances to drive institutional change and further academic collaboration.
- **Strategic Collaboration with International Institutions:** European University Alliances can reinforce Europe's role in global education by aligning their policies and practices with international organisations such as UNESCO, OECD, INQAHE, and the Magna Charta Observatory. Through these collaborations, alliances have already shared best practices and contributed to global education dialogues, enhancing the visibility and influence of European higher education.
- **Communities of Practice as a Strategic Tool:** The creation of a Community of Practice (“FOR-EU4All” project) can serve as a vital platform for both European and global engagement, as a follow-up group for reflection and action. By facilitating peer learning and addressing shared challenges, these CoPs enable higher education institutions to collectively promote European academic standards while reflecting on the future of internationalisation.

**Through alliances' internationalisation,
diplomacy will become the new frontier!**