In our interconnected world, addressing global challenges requires a collective effort. It is a shared responsibility to enable current and future generations to acquire future-proof skills for their own and Europe’s benefit.

The rapidly evolving labour market and societal transitions require higher education institutions to adapt and provide students, academics, university staff, and lifelong learners with the skills they need to navigate the twin green and digital transition and build a resilient society. Beyond their core tasks of teaching, research and innovation, universities are key actors in Europe to address big societal challenges, being true engines of development for cities and regions and promoting civic engagement.

In this context, transnational education is no longer an option but a crucial necessity, with a much deeper level of cooperation needed between universities, and with all key actors. The European Universities initiative aims at fostering excellence, innovation and inclusion in higher education across Europe and at accelerating the transformation of higher education institutions into the universities of the future with structural, systemic and sustainable impact. European Universities embody the freedom to learn, work together, research, innovate, share knowledge and capacity across borders.

European Universities are ambitious transnational alliances of higher education institutions developing long-term structural and strategic cooperation.

Key criteria

Minimum of 3 higher education institutions, from 3 EU Member States or third countries associated to the Erasmus+ programme.

Key cooperation principles

- Alliances develop joint long-term strategies for education with, where possible, links to research and innovation to drive systemic, structural and sustainable impact at all levels of their institutions
- Alliances create and implement European inter-university campuses, where:
  - students, academics, university staff, researchers and lifelong learners enjoy seamless mobility (physical, virtual or blended) to study, train, teach, do research, work or share services across borders and disciplines
  - transdisciplinary and transnational teams of students, academics and external stakeholders tackle big issues facing Europe (such as climate protection, digitalisation, health, democracy, migration, security)
  - practical and/or work-based experience is provided to foster an entrepreneurial mind-set and develop civic engagement
  - the student body reflects the social, economic and cultural diversity of the population
- Cooperating partners should come from different parts of Europe

“Higher education institutions from all over Europe participate, not only from capital cities but also from more remote European regions”
In November 2017, the 28 EU leaders debated the future of education at the Gothenburg Social Summit in Sweden. In the same month, the European Commission set out a vision for a European Education Area to be built by 2025 "in which learning, studying and doing research would not be hampered by borders". The European Universities initiative is a flagship initiative of the European Education Area. It enables a new generation of Europeans to cooperate across languages, borders and disciplines, developing a strong European identity. It is also a flagship initiative of the European strategy for universities that sets the ambition to support at least 60 European Universities alliances involving more than 500 higher education institutions by mid-2024.

October 2018 European Commission launches 1st Erasmus+ call to higher education institutions to start testing different models for European Universities

June 2019 Results of 1st call announced

November 2019 First 17 European Universities start cooperating

November 2019 Launch of 2nd Erasmus+ call

July 2020 Results of 2nd call announced

November 2020 24 new European Universities start cooperating

November 2022 Launch of 3rd Erasmus+ call announced

July 2022 Results of 3rd call announced – full roll-out phase

Autumn 2022 44 European Universities consolidating and expanding their cooperation and launch of 4th Erasmus+ Call

July 2023 Results of 4th call announced

Autumn 2023 Launch of 5th Erasmus+ call

Summer 2024 Results of 5th call announced. 64 European Universities involving more than 560 higher education institutions from all parts of Europe are transforming higher education

NOW JUST IMAGINE BEING A PART OF IT

By mid-2024, 64 European Universities...
representing more than 560 diverse types of higher education institutions...
from all over Europe...
are funded through Erasmus+

Find out more about the European Universities alliances and future developments of the initiative...

#EuropeanUniversities

Erasmus+ @EUErasmusPlus @European_Youth_EU

© European Union, 2024 – Pictures: Getty Images, iStockphoto