



EU CONEXUS

European University for Smart
Urban Coastal Sustainability

Position Paper Systemic support for European University Alliances

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European University alliances advance the Europeanness of education

The European University Alliances are testbeds for multiple modes and instruments promoting strengthened and strategic transnational cooperation structures between universities in the European Union. They are actively transforming the landscape of higher education in Europe relying on previous initiatives in the European Higher Education Area - such as most importantly the Bologna process - and support of the European Education Area (EEA) within the European Universities' initiative (EUI).

European University Alliances also strengthen the European Research Area

Universities not only teach. They also research and reach out to society for innovation and civic engagement. As such, universities work at the boundaries of the EEA and the ERA - and beyond, for example by creating transnational digital platforms and engaging in transregional economic cooperation networks.

The fragmented European policy framework for education and research needs to be more integrated, strategic and sustainable

Since its launch in 2019, the EUI has not only raised awareness of what higher education transnational cooperation possibilities. It has also raised political willingness to change national legal systems to facilitate it. This is remarkable progress in harmonising a policy area of exclusive competence of Member States, in which the EU can only offer support, coordinate or complement Member States actions.

Research, on the other hand, is legislated at European and national levels. Research transnational cooperation has enjoyed strong support from multiannual European framework programmes since 1984 that have created reliable mechanisms and instruments at European level that form a coherent European Research Area.

An integrated, comprehensive and sustainable support framework for European University Alliances is needed – one that transgresses institutionalised borders to support higher education and research at European and national level and between policy areas to date artificially separated in organisational silos.

Therefore, required are:

- **more flexibility in the legal framework for education at national level**
- **pooled funding for European University Alliances at national and European levels**
- **pooled funding between European framework programmes and Erasmus+**
- **synergies with other funding instruments at European or national levels (Digital Europe, Creative Europe, ERDF, national university and research support instruments, etc.)**
- **dedicated funding instruments targeting transnational cooperation for European University Alliances and beyond, e.g. European Degree joint programmes**

Such an integrated, strategic and sustainable supporting framework for universities will help foster the institutional transformations foreseen in the European Strategy for Universities and the ERA Strategy. It is a sine qua non for the success and “role-model” effect of European University Alliances within the European higher education and research system.

Signed by The Rectors of the European University for Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability
