

# EU-CONEXUS Policy Brief

N°12 – January 2026

## Scope:

Selected policy updates, consultations and events relevant to European Universities alliances (incl. sustainability, mobility, research integration, values and digital transformation).

## Disclaimer:

This brief is an information note prepared by EU-CONEXUS AISBL. It summarises selected external developments and does not constitute an official position of the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council, or national authorities.

# Political Environment and Regulatory Framework for the Alliances

## 1) NATIONAL-LEVEL SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCES: EVIDENCE BASE AND GAPS

A recent ACA report maps **national support schemes** for participation in European Universities alliances and highlights wide variation in **funding models, regulatory enabling conditions, and policy recognition** across countries—pointing to fragmentation risks as alliances move from “project mode” to long-term institutional integration.

**Relevance for EU-CONEXUS:** Reinforces the need for a coordinated EU-level narrative and common expectations on minimum national enabling conditions (co-funding, legal/administrative flexibility, staffing recognition, and incentives aligned with alliance outcomes).

## 2) ERASMUS+ POST-2027: LEGISLATIVE PROCESS MOVING FROM SIGNALS TO SHAPE

The next Erasmus+ cycle (2028–2034) is advancing through the EU policy pipeline, including an EP hearing and institutional opinions feeding into the evolving proposal. The debate increasingly links Erasmus+ to **competitiveness, skills, cohesion, and resilience**, while stakeholders stress predictability and impact demonstration.

**Relevance for EU-CONEXUS:** This is the “design window” to ensure European Universities remain a visible Erasmus+ priority with realistic implementation modalities and clear synergies with research/innovation instruments.

### 3) MOBILITY AND TALENT: THE COMMISSION'S FIRST EU VISA STRATEGY + MIGRATION STRATEGY

The Commission adopted a **first-ever EU Visa Strategy**, aiming to make visa policy more strategic in a context of geopolitical competition, security concerns, and a race for talent (including students and researchers). In parallel, the Commission presented a **five-year migration strategy**, with an explicit pillar on “labour and talent mobility to boost competitiveness” and references to qualification recognition and faster pathways.

**Relevance for EU-CONEXUS:** Likely downstream effects for international student/staff mobility, processing predictability, and the “attractiveness agenda” (especially for joint programmes, talent partnerships, and incoming mobility).

### 4) SKILLS PORTABILITY INITIATIVE: CONSULTATION WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR MICRO-CREDENTIALS AND MOBILITY

The Commission is gathering feedback on a **Skills Portability Initiative**, aimed at improving portability/recognition of skills across borders and systems—potentially impacting how qualifications, micro-credentials and learning outcomes are evidenced and trusted.

**Relevance for EU-CONEXUS:** Direct link to alliance priorities on joint learning pathways, interoperable credentialing, and simplification of recognition for study periods and short learning experiences.

### 5) AUTOMATIC RECOGNITION: RENEWED MOMENTUM VIA AUREA AND BROADER RECOGNITION AGENDA

AUREA published analysis on the **current state of automatic credit recognition**, highlighting persistent gaps in practice and the need for more consistent implementation and supporting processes across institutions.

**Relevance for EU-CONEXUS:** Supports continued investment in practical enablers (Learning Agreement processes, transparent

curricula mapping, and QA-supported recognition workflows), not only high-level political commitments.

## **6) ACADEMIC VALUES, DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE AND POLARISATION: VALUES AS A POLICY VARIABLE**

The EU has (re)intensified attention to **fundamental academic values** — academic freedom, institutional autonomy, integrity, and participatory governance—through policy work on “guiding principles” and related sector discussions.

**Relevance for EU-CONEXUS:** Values and integrity are increasingly treated as enabling conditions for cross-border cooperation and trust, including in joint education offers and research collaboration.

## **7) AI IN UNIVERSITIES: FROM EXPERIMENTATION TO INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES (AND RISK MANAGEMENT)**

EUA’s final report on AI adoption stresses responsible, values-guided deployment across university missions, with attention to ethics, governance, staff capacity and institutional strategy (beyond ad-hoc tool use).

**Relevance for EU-CONEXUS:** Provides a sector-legitimated reference for alliance-wide approaches to AI literacy, academic integrity safeguards, and shared governance principles.

## **8) DOCTORAL EDUCATION UNDER GEOPOLITICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ACCELERATION**

EUA’s work on doctoral education highlights the combined pressures of **research security, AI, research assessment reforms**, and expectations for the next generation of EU R&I programmes (2028–2034).

**Relevance for EU-CONEXUS:** Useful framing for alliance doctoral cooperation: resilience, integrity, responsible internationalisation, and alignment with the evolving FP10 debate.

# EU-CONEXUS Participation/ Representation in Strategic Development Actions

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## ACA FLAGSHIP SEMINAR “WHAT’S NEW IN BRUSSELS? 2026”

Brussels,  
29–30 January  
2026

ACA framed 2026 as a **pivotal year** for the final Erasmus+ calls under the current cycle and for shaping priorities and implementation modalities for Erasmus+ 2028–2034, including synergies with Horizon Europe and the emerging competitiveness agenda.

### **Suggested internal follow-up for EU-CONEXUS (operational):**

- Capture 3–5 alliance “proof points” (impact and transformation) for the Erasmus+ post-2027 narrative, aligned with common EU priorities (skills, competitiveness, cohesion, democracy).
- Identify which alliance actions are most exposed to visa/talent mobility developments (joint programmes; incoming mobility from strategic regions) and coordinate a light monitoring line.
- Link recognition work (credit recognition, interoperable credentialing) to the Skills Portability and automatic recognition agendas.

# Upcoming Events

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## EUA EVENT ON COMPETITIVENESS AND SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY

European Parliament,  
5 March 2026

EUA convenes stakeholders on how universities can contribute to competitiveness and sustainable prosperity—directly connected to the political narrative increasingly shaping EU programme design.

**Potential value for EU-CONEXUS:** intelligence on framing, language and expectations for the next MFF/programme cycle, and how universities are positioned in competitiveness discourse.

# Annex

## Policy updates

- [The Guild Statement: The contribution of European Universities alliances to research](#)
- ['Broken promises' on EUI alliances prompt calls for clarity](#)
- [What's new in Brussels? Key insights from ACA's flagship seminar](#)
- [European Parliament hearing on establishing Erasmus+ \(2028-2034\)](#)
- [Cypriot Presidency of the Council of the EU](#)
- [National-level support for participation in European Universities Alliances](#)
- [Statement by Executive Vice-President Mînzatu ahead of the International Day of Education - European Education Area, Education Package, digital education, skills, and citizenship education seem to be on top of the agenda](#)
- [Council of Europe launches drafting of a new Convention to strengthen automatic recognition of high...](#)
- [EESC Proposal for a regulation on Erasmus+](#)
- [Committee of the Regions Opinion Factsheet on the Erasmus+ programme for the period 2028-2034](#)
- [Commission presents a five-year strategy on migration \(including a new EU visa strategy with impact on mobility\)](#)

- [Japan to associate to Horizon Europe](#)
- [Adopting AI that serves the needs and values of universities](#): Final report of the EUA Task-and-Finish Group on Artificial Intelligence
- [Policies in doctoral education: navigating geopolitical change and technological acceleration while...](#)
- [UK launches new International Education Strategy](#)
- [AUREA: Report on the Current State of Automatic Credit Recognition](#)
- [Joint statement: A stronger Europe needs a properly funded Erasmus+](#)
- [Tacking social inequalities in student participation](#)
- [Publication: Guiding principles for protecting fundamental academic values](#)
- [Summary of Findings: Evidence-Based Mental Health Practices for Higher Education Institutions](#)
- [Promoting Well-being in Digital Education, Proposal for a Model of Emerging Practices](#)
- [Meet Europe's Gender equality champions in Research and Innovation](#)

## Consultation

- [Contribute to the first EU Action Plan for Women in Research, Innovation and Startups](#)
- [Commission seeks views on Skills Portability Initiative](#)

## Events

- [How Europe and its universities can join forces for competitiveness and sustainable prosperity,](#)  
March 5, European Parliament (on-site)

## Webinar Recording

- [Universities and democracy in times of polarisation](#)