

# A new vision for the European Universities alliances

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The European Parliament adopted by 461 votes to 100, with 48 abstentions, a resolution on a new vision for the European Universities alliances.

Parliament noted the warm welcome given by higher education institutions to the European Universities Initiative and its role in removing obstacles to cross-border and international cooperation in higher education, including fragmented funding, disparities between accreditation systems and legal obstacles.

Members are convinced of the potential of alliances **to strengthen the European Higher Education Area** and welcome the significant increase in the number of mobility projects involving students, lifelong learners and researchers, as well as academic and non-academic staff at universities participating in alliances.

However, they noted that the initial objective of achieving seamless mobility for 50 % of students in participating alliances has not yet been reached and will remain challenging without appropriate funding mechanisms. There is potential competition between the alliances' mobility schemes and universities' general Erasmus+ mobility, which share the same limited funding provisions.

The resolution stressed the need for alliances to uphold EU values, democratic resilience and institutional autonomy, and promote active citizenship. Members welcomed value-based initiatives such as solidarity-based cooperation with Ukraine, the global outreach of alliances, and the alliances' role in accession preparations candidate countries from the Eastern Neighbourhood and the Western Balkans. They believe that alliances should be closely aligned with the labour market to address skills shortages and Europe's competitiveness challenges.

## ***Recommendations***

Parliament encouraged alliances to deepen the link between **education and research** and highlighted the important capacity of alliances to create cross-border networks of excellence for researchers and to share and disseminate knowledge at European level and beyond, in particular in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), including in areas of strategic importance for the Union.

Members made the following recommendations:

- move from a 'project based logic' to transformative long-term cooperation by putting in place a financing approach that enables this transition;
- the need for coordinated, sustainable and predictable funding of current alliances. This includes ensuring that application and reporting procedures remain as simple as possible and encouraging an accelerated renewal procedure for successful alliances;
- study the viability of creating a tailor-made solution for financing alliances between European universities in the post-2027 multiannual financial framework, with the possibility of creating a separate programme;

- present a comprehensive investment strategy for alliances incorporating synergies with Union programmes such as Horizon Europe, the European Competitiveness Fund, the European Social Fund Plus and the European Regional Development Fund;
- encourage partnerships and structured cooperation between universities and businesses in order to create integrated systems that promote innovation and high-level technical and vocational training, and facilitate the transition of students to the job market;
- strengthen the internationalisation of alliances, given that alliances are at a level which lends itself to the establishment of partnerships with third countries, in particular candidate countries for accession to the Union;
- invest in secure digital infrastructures and strengthen existing initiatives such as the European Student Card, consolidate the interoperability of IT systems and align European and national policies to create genuine virtual European inter-campus;
- expand the use of micro-credentials, building on best practices, to integrate alliances into a wider learning environment and thus bring their work closer to that of other non-formal learning institutions;
- add criteria to possible future calls in line with topics linked to European strategic autonomy and competitiveness, such as resilience, energy, climate change, digital transition and digital skills, as well as defence.

Parliament stressed the need for alliances to have the appropriate structures and capacities to support the transfer of knowledge from academia to business. It stressed the need for effective and accessible awareness-raising and information campaigns on alliances between European universities to foster greater participation.