Erasmus+ Programme (ERASMUS)

Call for proposals

Partnerships for Excellence – European Universities – ERASMUS-EDU-2023-EUR-UNIV

EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY (EACEA)

EACEA.A - Erasmus+, EU Solidarity Corps
EACEA.A.1 - European Higher Education

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU **action grants** in the field of Higher Education under the **Erasmus+ Programme**.

The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:
- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- The basic act (Erasmus+ Regulation 2021/817[1]).

The call is launched in accordance with the Erasmus+ 2023 Work Programme[2] and will be managed by the **European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)** ('Agency').

⚠ Please note that this call is subject to the final adoption of the budget by the EU budgetary authority. In case there are substantial changes, we may have to modify the call (or even cancel it).

The call covers the following **topics**:

- **ERASMUS-EDU-2023-EUR-UNIV-1 — European Universities – Intensification of prior deep institutional transnational cooperation**

- **ERASMUS-EDU-2023-EUR-UNIV-2 — European Universities – Development of new deep institutional transnational cooperation**

Each project application under the call must address only one of these two topics.

We invite you to read the **call documentation** carefully, and in particular this Call Document, the Model Grant Agreement, the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual](#) and the [EU Grants AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

These documents provide clarifications and answers to questions you may have when preparing your application:

- The Call Document outlines the:
  - Background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2).
  - Timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4).
  - Admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6).
  - Criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7).
  - Evaluation and award procedure (section 8).
  - Award criteria (section 9).
  - Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10).
  - How to submit an application (section 11).

- the Online Manual outlines the:
  - Procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal').
  - Recommendations for the preparation of the application.

- the AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement contains:

  - Detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant *(including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc)*.

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[1]Regulation (EU) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport and repealing the Regulation 1288/2013 (OJ L189/1).

[2]Commission Implementing Decision C(2022) 6002 final of 25/08/2022 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2023 and the financing decision for the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme.

You are also encouraged to visit the Erasmus+ Project Results website to consult the list of projects funded previously.

1. Background

Heads of state and government called in the **European Council Conclusions of 14 December 2017** on the Member States, the Council and the European Commission, in line with their respective competences, to take work forward in encouraging the emergence of 'European Universities'. The Member States' support for the initiative has been reiterated, notably in the February 2021 **Council Resolution on a 'Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)'** that states that "*higher education institutions will be encouraged to find new forms of deeper cooperation, namely by creating transnational alliances, (…) and through the full roll-out of the European Universities initiative*." The **Council Conclusions on the European Universities initiative**, adopted on 17 May 2021, invited Member States and the Commission to "*consider more sustainable funding instruments for the 'European Universities'*', while taking into account the diversity of the cooperation models.

European Universities are a key flagship of the **European strategy for universities**, presented on 18 January 2022, which sets out the objective to expand to 60 European Universities with more than 500 higher education institutions by mid-2024, with an Erasmus+ indicative budget totalling EUR 1.1 billion for 2021-2027. **The Council conclusions on a European strategy empowering higher education institutions for the future of Europe,** adopted on 5 April 2022, highlight that "unlocking the full added value of alliances of higher education institutions such as the 'European Universities' calls for further support at European and, where appropriate, national level through a step-by-step approach" and that "alliances of higher education institutions, such as the 'European Universities', can demonstrate the potential of extensive and long-term institutional higher education cooperation" and "have the potential to generate real European added value by achieving critical mass on a European scale through the long-term commitment of all involved parties". The higher education sector, including European Universities, has also a key role to play in the implementation of the **new European Innovation Agenda** presented on 5 July 2022.

The Commission has co-created the European Universities initiative with Member States and stakeholders as of 2018 and launched under Erasmus+ three calls for proposals in 2019, 2020 and 2022. Currently, 44 European Universities have been selected and are up and running[3] collectively involving 340 higher education institutions of various sizes and types located across Europe, triggering unprecedented levels of institutionalised cooperation, making it systemic, structural and sustainable.

2. Objectives — Themes and priorities — Activities that can be funded — Expected impact

Objectives

The European Universities initiative is pivotal to achieving the ambitious vision of an innovative, globally competitive and attractive European Education Area by 2025, in full synergy with the European Research Area and the European Higher Education

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[3]Call results 2019: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_3389;
Call results 2020: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1264;
Call results 2022: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_4702.

Area, by transforming the institutional cooperation between higher education institutions and bring it to the next level. It mobilises **all four missions of higher education institutions: education, research and innovation and service to society**. They will **test diverse innovative and structural models** for implementing and achieving **systemic, structural and sustainable cooperation**, in full respect of **higher education landscape diversity**. They will serve as **inspiration for the wider higher education sector.**

As such, European Universities aim at achieving the following **main objectives**:

- **Promote common European values** as enshrined in article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and a **strengthened European identity** by bringing together a new generation of Europeans who are able to cooperate and work within different European and global cultures, in different languages, and across borders, sectors and academic disciplines.

- Reach a substantial leap in **quality, performance, attractiveness and international competitiveness** and enable **deep institutional transformation** of involved **European higher education institutions** and contribute to the European knowledge economy, employment, creativity, culture and welfare by making best use of innovative pedagogies and striving to make the knowledge square[4] a reality. European Universities will be key drivers to boost the quality of higher education and where possible to strengthen its links to the research and innovation landscape in Europe and its outreach towards the society and economy.

The scope of this call for proposals is to support higher education institutions in gradually achieving their long-term ambitious vision towards becoming a fully-fledged European University. This objective will be achieved through a **twofold approach:**

- **Topic 1**: this call topic will provide support for **already existing deep institutional transnational cooperation alliances** including – but not limited to – the European Universities alliances selected under the 2020 Erasmus+ call for proposals. The aim is to build upon the institutional cooperation achieved so far and to further deepen, intensify and expand the effectiveness of this existing cooperation to advance the higher education transformation process towards fully fledged 'European Universities'.

- **Topic 2:** this call topic will provide support for applicants **wishing to establish new deep institutional transnational cooperation** in a new 'European Universities' alliance.

Themes and priorities (scope)

Main priorities

The specific objectives below are valid for both call topics.

In 'European Universities', the term "Universities" should be understood in its broadest sense, including all types of Higher Education Institutions.

What are European Universities? European Universities are highly ambitious transnational alliances of higher education institutions developing long-term institutional structural and strategic cooperation, based on common values and agreed principles, and aiming to achieve sustainability of their cooperation. The European Universities initiative responds to a **long-term vision that has the potential to transform the institutional cooperation between higher education institutions and bring it to the next level.**

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[4]A concept understood as the junction of four core domains: education, research, innovation, and service to society - Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on achieving the European Education Area by 2025. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0625&rid=4 .

In this context, 'European Universities' will reach the above aims by gradually implementing the following specific objectives:

❖ **Develop and implement an integrated long-term joint strategy[5] for education** with, where possible, links to research and innovation, and service to society, that is responsive to the digital and green transition and key socio-economic challenges, while remaining committed to excellence:

→ Based on a **common vision and shared values**, for pursuing a high level of systemic, structural and sustainable institutional cooperation at all levels of the involved institutions, across all their missions, and across different areas of activity, building on their complementary strengths.

→ Supported by the design and implementation of relevant and efficient **joint management and governance structures**[6]. Students and staff at all levels of the participating organisations are empowered to take an active role in the governance structures of the alliance, where the diversity of the student and staff bodies is reflected.

→ Building on a shared **pool of resources** (financial, human, digital and physical, intellectual and administrative resources, infrastructure, data and services) to ensure joint capacity and capability, reach critical mass and facilitates access to high quality and inclusive education. Where appropriate, pilot or fully implement a common **legal status for the alliance**, to facilitate pooling together resources and activities to reach higher levels of excellence, acting with a legal personality.

❖ **Establish a European higher education inter-university 'campus' where**:

→ Students, doctoral candidates and staff benefit from seamless **mobility** opportunities (physical, blended mobility or virtual learning) to study, train, teach, do research, work, or share services in any of the partner institutions. Embedded mobility at all levels, including at Bachelor, Master and Doctoral levels, is a standard feature. At least 50% of the students within the alliance should benefit from such mobility, be it physical, virtual or blended.

→ **New joint, flexible and innovative curricula** are delivered, where relevant, in the three cycles (Bachelor, Master and Doctoral), based on inter-disciplinary and cross-sectoral approaches, integrating student-centred learning approaches and innovative pedagogies, including the use of the latest digital technologies and the STEAM[7] approach. While content is personalised, cooperation is global, in particular to develop the green and digital skills that society needs. **Students at all levels are empowered to customise their own flexible curricula**, choosing where and what to study, within the confines of pedagogically sound and logically structured study programmes between the different higher education institutions and other members of the alliance, setting a solid ground for exploring the feasibility of a possible joint degree at all levels, based on co-created European criteria, to be delivered at national, regional or institutional level, in accordance with the National Qualifications Frameworks.

→ **Other flexible learning opportunities and alternative learning pathways** are offered to learners at all stages of life, across disciplines and sectors,

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[5]Such strategy goes beyond any potential existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

[6]Examples: setting up joint boards, developing common pool of physical and virtual intellectual and administrative resources, pooling resources, including common provision of infrastructure, data and services such as student, researcher and staff support, administration and international relations, with digitalised joint processes wherever possible.

[7]STEAM: Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics. The STEAM approach for learning and teaching links STEM and other fields of study. It promotes transversal skills such as digital competencies, critical thinking, problem-solving, management and entrepreneurial skills as well as cooperation with non-academic partners and responds to economic, environmental, political and social challenges. STEAM encourages the blending of knowledge that is required in the real world and natural curiosity.

including small volumes of learning leading to **micro-credentials[8]**.

→ **Practical and work-based experience and traineeships** supported by external mentors are provided to foster **entrepreneurial mind-sets** and **civic engagement**, as well as to promote knowledge transfer with surrounding **ecosystems;** employability and flow of talent with other sectors is amplified.

→ The student, academic and research body better reflects the social, economic and cultural **diversity** of the global population, including lifelong learners, part-time and non-traditional students. Access, participation and completion of under-represented and disadvantaged groups are ensured. Institutional change is fostered, for example, through the development of inclusive **gender equality and inclusion plans** at institutional level, complemented by actions at the level of the alliance.

→ **Diverse career paths** are rewarded and valorised, while the academic, teaching, research careers are strengthened; parity of esteem between teaching and research is ensured when it comes to academic career assessment.

→ European Universities are expected to work towards open science, open education and open data practices.

→ Any other creative and innovative activities that are key to reach the joint long-term strategy are implemented.

❖ **Build European knowledge-creating teams ("challenge-based approach**") of students and academics, possibly together with researchers, entrepreneurs, companies, local and regional actors, and civil society actors – depending on the overall strategy and vision of the alliance – working together to address societal and other challenges of their choice in an inter-disciplinary approach through:

→ **Challenge-based approaches** combining shared education, teaching and learning, pedagogical innovation, research and innovation and allowing involved parties to **work jointly and across disciplines** through investigation and invention, thus reinforcing excellence in education and research and engagement with citizens.

→ **Innovative learning and training** that develop knowledge and equip students, lifelong learners and researchers with critical thinking, entrepreneurial, creative and transversal skills, and innovative spirit relevant for a fast-changing labour market and profound structural transition-driven changes in markets, technologies and society, including through the transfer of research results back into education e.g. in teaching, re-skilling, through student traineeships in research teams.

→ **Innovative solutions** adaptable to different regions in Europe.

In addition, 'European Universities' should progressively build their capacity to act as **models of good practice to further increase the quality, international competitiveness and attractiveness of the European higher education landscape**. European Universities, in cooperation with their national authorities, should commit to work towards relevant policy objectives of the European Education Area, such as: multilingualism; automatic recognition of academic qualifications and learning periods abroad provided for by the participating higher education institutions within the alliance; the implementation of the European Student Card initiative; where relevant, the implementation of a whole institutional approach to sustainability

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[8] As defined in Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability (2022/C 243/02), 'Micro-credential' means the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes will have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria. Learning experiences leading to micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared and are portable. They may be stand-alone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity.

and climate literacy and mainstreaming of education for sustainable development across all levels and disciplines; as well as the Bologna key commitments (quality assurance, recognition, and wherever applicable three cycle degree); and share relevant data with the European Higher Education Observatory. European Universities alliances are also encouraged to work together, for example by forming hubs, together with their innovation ecosystems, to join forces and work on common actions for bringing synergies between education and innovation, as highlighted in the European strategy for universities and the new European Innovation Agenda.

Activities that can be funded (scope)

Applicants can submit a proposal that aims either to support existing alliances (Topic 1 of the action) or to set-up new alliances (Topic 2 of the action) going beyond any existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation, through a **step-by-step approach towards deeper institutionalised transnational cooperation and gradually achieving the long-term ambitious vision for European Universities**.

This action will test **different innovative and structural models** for implementing and achieving the **long-term vision that has the potential to transform the institutional cooperation between higher education institutions and bring it to the next level**. They will have the possibility to associate academic and non-academic partners from the world of work and to grow at a later stage.

Higher education institutions will gradually implement the activities that are necessary to achieve their long-term vision, starting by increasing their level of integration. To achieve this objective, they will agree on a **joint mission statement**[9] endorsed by the relevant decision-making bodies[10] at institutional level of each member of the alliance. This mission statement will entail a **full joint strategy** outlining the long-term vision to drive systemic, structural and sustainable impact at all levels of the institutions (e.g. governance, academics, professional/support staff and students), and across different areas of activity (strong education focus with links where possible to research and innovation and service to society), going beyond the alliance EU funding period and building on their complementary strengths.

As this action follows a bottom-up approach, each alliance will have the flexibility to shape through a step-by-step approach its **joint work plan of activities** that is the most relevant to reach their strategic objectives and that will enable them to achieve the long-term vision of European Universities described above. This joint work plan of activities should be supported by the design of relevant and efficient **common management and governance structures**.

(Only relevant for Topic 1 of this call) *Optional/voluntary:* to increase the number of higher education institutions involved in the European Universities initiative, for the already existing deep institutional transnational cooperation alliances including – but not limited to – the European Universities funded under the 2020 Erasmus+ call (Topic 1 of this call), **a strategy to expand** by **adding new full partners**[11] in their consortia can be developed and implemented, as part of the joint work plan of activities. Such **expansion is voluntary** in full respect of the institutional autonomy, and each alliance can **decide on the number of partners to be added**.

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[9]The joint mission statement should explain your proposed European University's fundamental purpose. It should go beyond the 4-year funding period, with at least a time horizon up to 10 years after the start. It should also explain how your alliance has the potential to step-by-step transform and enhance the institutionalised cooperation between higher education institutions and bring it to the next level, and explain the unique and differentiated vision of the alliance.

[10]This can be done through a simple signature of relevant decision-making bodies (e.g. a signature from the Rector).The Joint Mission Statement is one document endorsed by each partner of the alliance.

[11]The number of existing partners should be counted only taking into account higher education institutions integrated as full partners from EU Member States or countries associated to the Erasmus+ programme.

Nevertheless, once the strategy to expand is set in the proposal, it becomes mandatory to implement, like all other planned activities in the work plan annexed to the grant agreement. The **new partners should be higher education institutions** fulfilling the eligibility conditions under point 6 of this call. It is mandatory that **these new higher education institutions are integrated as full partners in the alliances** and that the total number of new higher education institutions to join the alliance during the grant funding period is determined at proposal stage. The realization of the voluntary expansion strategy should strive to **ensure a balanced geographical coverage of regions in Europe.** The expansion can take place at application stage or at any time of the work plan implementation, and at **the latest by the start of the 4th year** enabling new partners to fully engage in the alliance by the end of the funding period.

All proposals under topic 1 will be **evaluated against the same award criteria whether an alliance decides to expand or not** (see section 9).

Expected impact

The European Universities alliances are expected to **benefit to all involved higher education institutions, higher education systems, EU Member States and the broader society and HEIs ecosystem**.

European Universities are expected to trigger the following impact:

- Play a critical role in promoting the European way of life, and in achieving the European Education Area and the European Research Area, in synergy with the European Higher Education Area.
- Contribute to a more united, innovative, digital, connected and green Europe, open to the wider world, by increasing the resilience, excellence, geographical and social inclusiveness of European higher education institutions.
- Increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of participating higher education institutions on the global scene, by becoming stronger together through deeper transnational cooperation and seamless mobility of students, academics and researchers, and creating and sharing knowledge, developing new concepts, technologies and innovation at unprecedented speed.
- Promote European values, foster respect of academic freedom and institutional autonomy and strengthen the European identity for all learners, teachers, researchers and staff to cooperate and co-create knowledge within different European and global cultures, in different languages, across borders, sectors and academic disciplines.
- Act as actors of change for the digital and green transitions, for Europe's recovery and future resilience.
- Boost the excellence dimension of higher education, research and innovation, while promoting gender equality, inclusiveness, diversity and equity.
- Trigger a much deeper level of transnational institutional cooperation between higher education institutions, leading to long-term structural institutional transformation with positive impact on higher education learning and teaching, fostering joint educational activities and allowing for more inclusive and enhanced flexible learning approaches. Improve students', staff, researchers and lifelong learners' skills and employability perspectives, including entrepreneurial, transversal, intercultural, digital and green skills, and fuel innovation through a flow of creative talents to support the establishment and scaling up of start-ups and SMEs in Europe, notably by setting up and reinforcing technology transfer, or sharing knowledge and technology transfer capacity, thus potentially supporting the development of emerging novel concepts likely to lead to breakthroughs or market creative innovations.
- Make lifelong learning a reality in higher education, by offering diverse education opportunities and introducing innovative and student-centred pedagogies, jointly

delivered across European inter-university campuses, where a diverse student body can build flexible learning paths at all levels of their studies and career.

• Advance knowledge and enable talent circulation, thus fostering education, social and technological innovation to address societal challenges, and build a more sustainable future.

• Contribute to regional development and positively impact the local communities and ecosystems through education and training, research and knowledge exchange, contributing to improvements in societal well-being.

• Act as catalysts for the launch of new instruments and legal frameworks to accelerate the transformation of all universities across Europe.

3. Available budget

The total budget earmarked for the co-financing of projects under this call for proposals is estimated at **EUR 384 000 000**.

Topics	Topic indicative budget
1- Intensification of prior deep institutional transnational cooperation	345.6 MEUR
2- Development of new deep institutional transnational cooperation	38.4 MEUR

The availability of the call budget depends on the adoption of the 2023 budget by the EU budgetary authority.

We reserve the right not to award all available funds and to redistribute them between the call topics, subject to the proposals received and the results of the evaluation.

Additional funds: Further information on the available additional funds will be published on the Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal (FTOP).[12]

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines	
Publication of the call:	30 September 2022
Deadline for submission:	31 January 2023 – 17:00:00 CET (Brussels)
Evaluation:	February-June 2023 (indicative)
Information on evaluation results:	30 June 2023 (indicative)
GA signature:	September - November 2023 (indicative)

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[12] Possible additional funds would be granted through the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1529

5. Admissibility and documents

Proposals must be submitted before the **call deadline** *(see timetable section 4)*.

Proposals must be submitted **electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Topic page in the Search Funding & Tenders section). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Proposals (including annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided *inside* the Submission System (⚠ NOT the documents available on the Topic page — they are only for information).

Proposals must be **complete** and contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents:

– Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project *(to be filled in directly online)*.

– Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project *(to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded)*.

– Part C (to be filled in directly online) containing additional project data.

– **Mandatory annexes and supporting documents** *(to be uploaded)*:
  – *Detailed budget table (template available in the Submission System).*
  – *CVs of core project team: not applicable.*
  – *Activity reports of last year: not applicable.*
  – *List of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) (template available in Part B).*
  – *Other annex: the joint mission statement (see section 2).*

Please be aware that since the detailed budget table serves as the basis for fixing the lump sums for the grants (and since lump sums must be reliable proxies for the actual costs of a project), the costs you include MUST comply with the basic eligibility conditions for EU actual cost grants *(see AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6)*. This is particularly important for purchases and subcontracting, which must comply with best value for money (or if appropriate the lowest price) and be free of any conflict of interests. If the budget table contains ineligible costs, the grant may be reduced (even later on during the project implementation or after their end).

Please note that the amounts entered into the summarised budget table (filled in directly online) must correspond to the amounts calculated in the detailed budget table. In case of discrepancies, the amounts in the online summarised budget table will prevail.

At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the **mandate to act** for all applicants. Moreover you will have to confirm that the information in the application is correct and complete and that the participants comply with the conditions for receiving EU funding (especially eligibility, financial and operational capacity, exclusion, etc). Before signing the grant, each beneficiary and affiliated entity will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour (DoH). Proposals without full support will be rejected.

Your application must be **readable, accessible and printable**.

Proposals are limited to maximum **120 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

You may be asked at a later stage for further documents *(for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc)*.

ℹ️ For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the Online Manual.

6. Eligibility

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

In order to be eligible, the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must:

– Be legal entities (public or private bodies).

– Be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:

  – EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs)).
  – Non-EU countries: third countries associated to the Erasmus+ Programme (including EEA countries), countries which are in ongoing negotiations for an association agreement to the Erasmus+ programme and where that agreement enters into force before the grant signature (list of participating countries) and .
  – Non-EU countries: Western Balkans third countries not associated to the programme[13].

The applicants (potential beneficiaries and their affiliated entities if any) must be:

– Higher Education Institutions holding a valid Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) and entities affiliated to them, including:

  – Higher Education Institutions already involved in deep institutional transnational cooperation, such as those being part of European Universities selected under the 2020 Erasmus+ call. They can be joined on a voluntary basis by other higher education institutions - holding a valid Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) and entities affiliated to them - wishing to participate in such existing alliances.

  – Higher Education Institutions wishing to establish new deep institutional transnational cooperation in a new alliance.

– Any other organisation consisting of the above referred higher education institutions - specifically set up with the purpose of implementing deep institutional transnational cooperation, including joint educational activities[14].

Beneficiaries and affiliated entities must register in the Participant Register — before submitting the proposal — and will have to be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation). For the validation, they will be requested to upload documents showing legal status and origin.

Other entities may participate in other consortium roles, such as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions, etc. *(see section 13)*.

Associated partners DO NOT receive EU funding under this grant, but their involvement and role in different activities have to be clearly described in the proposal.

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[13] Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo (This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.)

[14]Associated partners can also be involved in such organisation having its own legal entity, provided that they do not receive any EU funding.

The associated partners can be:
- Any higher education institution established in an EU Member State or a third country associated to the programme holding a valid ECHE Erasmus Charter for Higher Education.
- Any public/private organisation from an EU Member State or third country associated to the programme active in the field of education and training, research and innovation or in the world of work.
- Any higher education institution established in a third country not associated to the programme that is part of the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process) or in Kosovo.

Specific cases

Natural persons — Natural persons are NOT eligible (with the exception of self-employed persons, i.e. sole traders, where the company does not have legal personality separate from that of the natural person).

International organisations — International organisations are eligible. The rules on eligible countries do not apply to them.

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons[15].

EU bodies — EU bodies (with the exception of the European Commission Joint Research Centre) can NOT be part of the consortium.

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'[16]. ⚠️ Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

Countries currently negotiating association agreements — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations *(see list above)* may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are concluded before grant signature (with retroactive effect, if provided in the agreement).

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities *(e.g. entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)[17] and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No 2013/C 205/05[18])*. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

ℹ️ For more information, *see Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment*.

Consortium composition

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[15]See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.
[16]For the definitions, see Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.
[17]Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the EU Sanctions Map.
[18]Commission guidelines No 2013/C 205/05 on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11).

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least 3 applicants (beneficiaries not affiliated entities), which complies with the following conditions:

- Minimum 3 eligible higher education institutions from 3 different eligible countries.

- A higher education institution may participate as full partner in only one European Universities alliance funded by the Erasmus+ programme at the same time.

- A higher education institution may only participate as full partner in one single European Universities application; they may participate in other applications only as associated partners.

Eligible activities

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section 2 above.

Projects should take into account the results of projects supported by other EU funding programmes. The complementarities must be described in the project proposals (Part B of the Application Form).

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities *(such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc)*.

Financial support to third parties is allowed for grants and prizes under the following conditions:

- The calls must be open, published widely and conform to EU standards concerning transparency, equal treatment, conflict of interest and confidentiality.
- The calls must remain open for at least two months.
- The outcome of the call must be published on the participants' websites, including a description of the selected projects, award dates, project durations, and final recipient legal names and countries.
- The calls must have a clear European dimension.

The maximum amount for the financial support to third parties may not exceed 60,000 EUR. It will be accepted in projects where such support will bring an added value.

Your project application must clearly specify why financial support to third parties is needed, how it will be managed and provide a list of the different types of activities for which a third party may receive financial support. The proposal must also clearly describe the results to be obtained.

Geographic location (target countries)

Proposals must relate to activities taking place in the countries eligible *(see above)*.

Duration

Projects should normally last 48 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

Financial capacity

Applicants must have **stable and sufficient resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects.

The financial capacity check will be carried out on the basis of the documents you will be requested to upload in the Participant Register during grant preparation *(e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc)*. The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The check will normally be done for all beneficiaries, except:
— Public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations.
— If the individual requested grant amount is not more than EUR 60,000.

If needed, it may also be done for affiliated entities.

If we consider that your financial capacity is not satisfactory, we may require:
— Further information.
— An enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities *(see below, section 10).*
— Pre-financing paid in instalments.
— (One or more) pre-financing guarantee *(see below, section 10).*
or
— Propose reduced or no pre-financing.
— Request that you are replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

For more information, *see Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment*.

Operational capacity

Applicants must have the **know-how, qualifications** and **resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share (including sufficient experience in projects of comparable size and nature).

This capacity will be assessed together with the 'Quality' award criterion, on the basis of the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including operational resources (human, technical and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain it by the time the task implementation starts.

If the evaluation of the award criterion is positive, the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

Applicants will have to show their operational capacity via the following information:

— Profiles (qualifications and experience) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project.
— Description of the consortium participants.
— List of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years).

Additional supporting documents may be requested, if needed to confirm the operational capacity of any applicant.

Public bodies, Member State organisations and international organisations are exempted from the operational capacity check.

Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate[19]:

– Bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts).

– In breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts).

– Guilty of grave professional misconduct[20] (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

– Committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

– Shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

– Guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No 2988/95 (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

– Created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that[21]:

– During the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information.

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[19]See Articles 36 and 141 of EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.
[20]Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.
[21]See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

8. Evaluation and award procedure

Proposals will have to follow the **standard submission and evaluation procedure** (one-stage submission + one-step evaluation).

An **evaluation committee** (assisted by independent outside experts) will assess all applications. Proposals will first be checked for admissibility and eligibility, *see sections 5 and 6*). Proposals found admissible and eligible will be evaluated (for each topic) against the operational capacity and award criteria *(see sections 7 and 9)* and then ranked according to their scores.

For proposals with the same score (within a topic or budget envelope) a **priority order** will be determined according to the following approach:

Successively for every group of *ex aequo* proposals, starting with the highest scored group, and continuing in descending order:

1) Projects focusing on a theme that is not otherwise covered by higher ranked projects will be considered to have the highest priority.

2) The ex aequo proposals within the same topic will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the award criterion 'Relevance'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Quality'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Impact'.

3) If this does not allow to determine the priority, a further prioritisation can be done by considering the overall project portfolio and the creation of positive synergies between projects, or other factors related to the objectives of the call. These factors will be documented in the panel report.

4) After that, the remainder of the available call budget will be used to fund projects across the different topics in order to ensure a balanced spread of the geographical and thematic coverage and while respecting to the maximum possible extent the order of merit based on the evaluation of the award criteria.

   All proposals will be informed about the evaluation result (**evaluation result letter**). Successful proposals will be invited for grant preparation; the other ones will be put on the reserve list or rejected.

   The proposals which have been assessed and scored as high quality (above 80 points) but that can not be funded under Erasmus+ due to lack of available budget under this call for proposals will be awarded with a Seal of Excellence. The Seal of Excellence is a quality label that recognises the quality of the concerned proposals and facilitates the search for alternative funding at national level, thereby helping other funding bodies to take advantage of the high quality evaluation process under this call.

⚠ No commitment for funding — Invitation to grant preparation does NOT constitute a formal commitment for funding. We will still need to make various legal checks before grant award: *legal entity validation, financial capacity, exclusion check, etc*.

Grant preparation will involve a dialogue in order to fine-tune technical or financial aspects of the project and may require extra information from your side. It may also include adjustments to the proposal to address recommendations of the evaluation committee or other concerns. Compliance will be a pre-condition for signing the grant.

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed, you can submit a **complaint** (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter). Please note that notifications which have not been opened within 10 days after sending are

considered to have been accessed and that deadlines will be counted from opening/access *(see also Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions)*. Please also be aware that for complaints submitted electronically, there may be character limitations.

9. Award criteria

The **award criteria** for this call are as follows:

TOPIC 1	
1. Relevance (maximum 25 points)	

Level of ambition and innovative approach of the proposal	Extent to which the proposal:
	• Aims to address and progress towards the long term vision of the European Universities initiative (please see section 2).
	• Is ambitious and innovative.
	• Builds upon the institutional cooperation achieved so far as a starting point to further deepen, strengthen, intensify and expand institutionalised cooperation across the institutions, enhancing the transformation process at institutional level and demonstrating progress towards the alliance's long term vision:
	  - In the provision of education, linking it where possible to research and innovation, as compared to the current state of play.
	  - Through innovative and new systemic, structural and sustainable cooperation models.
	
	• Presents an updated and highly relevant joint long-term mission statement, explicitly endorsed by relevant decision-making bodies.

European added value	Extent to which the proposal: • Contributes to the development of the European Education Area, in synergy with the European Research Area, where relevant. • Contributes to the implementation of relevant actions of the European strategy for universities and the new European Innovation Agenda, possibly in cooperation with other European Universities. • Demonstrates European added value through its transnational dimension, in particular for students. • Demonstrates contribution to regional development, for example through the engagement of the alliance's members in their regional ecosystems and with their local communities, including in the context of the Smart Specialisation Strategies. • Benefits other higher education institutions in Europe and beyond, by driving inclusion and excellence.
2. Quality (maximum 50 points)	

2.1. Project design and implementation
 	
(maximum 25 points)
	• Consistency between the joint long-term strategy and the proposed joint structures and joint activities to achieve it.
	• Extent to which the proposal demonstrates how the development of a joint strategy will match the level of ambition of European Universities and how the joint activities will contribute efficiently to strengthening and enhancing:
	  - High quality education, including through the use of challenge-based and interdisciplinary approaches, innovative pedagogical models to develop forward-looking skills and competences, making best use of digital technologies, blended learning and work-based learning.
	  - Level of mobility (physical, virtual, blended; short and long term) for students, academics and professional staff and researchers.
	  - Where possible, the links between education and research and innovation, including how research results and innovation will feed back into education.
	  - The level of engagement with key stakeholders foster societal engagement of students and staff as well as their entrepreneurial key competences.
	  - The social diversity of the student, academics and researchers body and supporting measures to promote the inclusion, access, participation and completion of under-represented groups and people with fewer opportunities, as well as support for gender

	equality in higher education.
	• Clarity and feasibility of the work plan and roadmap, explicitly describing the expected progress, outputs and outcomes for each phase associated to concrete activities and actions contributing to the realisation of the joint long-term strategy.
	• Quality and financial settings: setup of a quality assessment and review which includes specific measures for evaluation of progress, processes and deliverables (e.g. through the development of suitable quantitative and qualitative indicators, including the feedback from students and staff). The quality monitoring should also ensure that the implementation of the alliance is cost-efficient.
2.2 Partnership and cooperation arrangements *(maximum 25 points)*	**Cooperation arrangements** • Arrangement structure: the distribution of responsibilities and tasks is clear and appropriate, demonstrates the financial, structural and organisational commitment at highest institutional level. Clearly demonstrates a deep institutional transnational cooperation for already a period of at least between two and three years at the time the application is submitted. Gives all staff the opportunity to be part of the co-creation of the alliance, both through the provision of education and, where possible, research and innovation, and at a structural organisation level through shared management structures, common provision of services, databases, human resources and scientific infrastructure. Level of involvement of students in the co-creation of the alliance and in the joint structures. • Roles and responsibilities: the capacity and active role of each member of the alliance to deliver jointly the common vision, strategy and common activities is clearly demonstrated. • Complementarity: the extent to which partners complement each other, including in terms of diversity of types of higher education institutions or show that they are collaborating with each other to obtain value added and cost efficiency, and are complementary with regard to the joint implementation of the common vision, strategy and common activities. • Cooperation arrangements are well designed to maximise the benefits of the integrated cooperation by reducing existing administrative barriers and obstacles and to promote all types of mobility within the alliance, including mobility to and from organisations other than higher education institutions. • The proposal includes clear arrangements and responsibilities for transparent and efficient decision-making, conflict resolution, risk management and reporting and communication between the participating organisations. **Geographical balance** • The extent to which the alliance includes a large number of higher education institutions from different European geographical regions[22] and Western Balkans as full partners and ensures a wide geographical coverage. • The extent to which the applicant has motivated the geographical composition of the alliance and how it enables partners from different European regions to strengthen their institutional capacity.

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[22]Northern Europe: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Norway. Western Europe: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Lichtenstein. Central and Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, North Macedonia, Serbia Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo (This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.). Southern Europe: Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain, Turkey. These countries include the outermost regions as referred to in Article 349 TFEU.

3.Impact (maximum 25 points)
• Extent to which the proposal addresses and demonstrates progresses towards the impact listed in section 2 of this call. • Long term strategy for the sustainability of the alliance: the proposal includes a vision on sustainability outlining how each member of the alliance will support this financially or otherwise with the objective of being sustainable beyond the EU funded period. • Capacity of the alliance to act as role model: the extent to which outputs and good practices generated by the alliance will be shared and have the potential to be mainstreamed in other higher education institutions with whom they cooperate beyond the alliance in Europe and beyond. • Dissemination: the proposal provides a clear dissemination plan of results, experiences and good practices put in place, and includes appropriate human and financial resources, activities, tools and communication channels including the use of social media to ensure that results, outputs and innovation triggered by the European University will be fully accessible and shared openly and effectively to a wide range of stakeholders during and after the EU funding period of the European Universities alliance. • Open Education and Open Science and Citizen Science resources: If relevant, and within the limits of existing national and European legal frameworks, the proposal describes how data, materials, documents, audiovisual and social media activity will be made available to make data searchable, accessible, interoperable, and re-usable (FAIR) to other higher education institutions and European Universities in Europe.

TOPIC 2	
1. Relevance (maximum 25 points)	

Level of ambition and innovative approach of the proposal	Extent to which the proposal:
	• Aims to address and progress towards the long term vision of the European Universities initiative (please see section 2) and its potential to transform and enhance institutionalised cooperation.
	• Presents a highly relevant joint long-term mission statement explicitly endorsed by relevant decision-making bodies.
	• Is ambitious and presents an innovative approach, including the extent to which the alliance will strengthen and expand cooperation:
	   - In the provision of education, linking it where possible to research and innovation, as compared to the current state of play.
	   - Through innovative and new, systemic, structural and sustainable cooperation models.

European added value	Extent to which the proposal: • Contributes to the development of the European Education Area, in synergy with the European Research Area, where relevant. • Contributes to the implementation of relevant actions of the European strategy for universities and the new European Innovation Agenda • Demonstrates European added value through its transnational dimension, in particular for students. • Demonstrates contribution to regional development, for example through the engagement of the alliance's members in their regional ecosystems and with their local communities, including in the context of the Smart Specialisation Strategies. • Benefits other higher education institutions in Europe and beyond, by driving inclusion and excellence.
2. Quality (maximum 50 points)	
2.1. Project design and implementation *(maximum 25 points)*	• Consistency between the joint long-term strategy and the proposed joint structures and joint activities to achieve it. • Extent to which the proposal demonstrates how the development of a joint strategy will match the level of ambition of European Universities and how the joint activities will contribute efficiently to strengthening and enhancing: - High quality education, including through the use of challenge-based and interdisciplinary approaches, innovative pedagogical models to develop forward-looking skills and competences, making best use of digital technologies, blended learning and work-based

	learning. - Level of mobility (physical, virtual, blended; short and long term) for students, academics and professional staff and researchers. - Where possible, the links between education and research and innovation, including how research results and innovation will feed back into education. - The level of engagement with key stakeholders foster societal engagement of students and staff as well as their entrepreneurial key competences. - The social diversity of the student, academics and researchers body and supporting measures to promote the inclusion, access, participation and completion of under-represented groups and people with fewer opportunities, as well as support for gender equality in higher education. • Clarity and feasibility of the work plan and roadmap, explicitly describing the expected progress, outputs and outcomes for each phase associated to concrete activities and actions contributing to the realisation of the joint long-term strategy. • Quality and financial settings: setup of a quality assessment and review which includes specific measures for evaluation of progress, processes and deliverables (e.g. through the development of suitable quantitative and qualitative indicators, including the feedback from students and staff). The quality monitoring should also ensure that the implementation of the alliance is cost-efficient.
2.2 Partnership and cooperation arrangements *(maximum 25 points)*	**Cooperation arrangements** • Arrangement structure: the distribution of responsibilities and tasks is clear and appropriate, demonstrates the financial, structural and organisational commitment at highest institutional level while giving all staff the opportunity to be part of the co-creation of the alliance, both through the provision of education and, where possible, research and innovation, and at a structural organisation level through shared management structures, common provision of services, databases, human resources and scientific infrastructure. Level of involvement of students in the co-creation of the alliance and in the joint structures. • Roles and responsibilities: the capacity and active role of each member of the alliance to deliver jointly the common vision, strategy and common activities is clearly demonstrated. • Complementarity: the extent to which partners complement each other, including in terms of diversity of types of HEIs or show that they are collaborating with each other to obtain value added and cost efficiency and are complementary with regard to the joint implementation of the common vision, strategy and common activities. • Cooperation arrangements are well designed to maximise the benefits of the integrated cooperation by reducing existing administrative barriers and obstacles and to promote all types of mobility within the alliance, including mobility to and from organisations other than higher education institutions. • The proposal includes clear arrangements and responsibilities for transparent and efficient decision-making, conflict resolution, risk management and reporting and communication between the participating organisations. **Geographical balance** • The extent to which the alliance includes a high number of higher education institutions from different European geographical regions[23] and Western Balkans as full partners and ensures a wide geographical coverage. • The extent to which the applicant has motivated the geographical composition of the alliance and how it enables partners from different European regions to strengthen their institutional capacity.

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[23]Northern Europe: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Norway. Western Europe: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Lichtenstein. Central and Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, North Macedonia, Serbia Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo (This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.). Southern Europe: Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain, Turkey. These countries include the outermost regions as referred to in Article 349 TFEU.

3.Impact (maximum 25 points)
• Extent to which the proposal addresses and demonstrates progresses towards the impact listed in section 2 of this call. • Long term strategy for the sustainability of the alliance: the proposal includes a vision on sustainability outlining how each member of the alliance will support this financially or otherwise with the objective of being sustainable beyond the EU funded period. • Capacity of the alliance to act as role model: the extent to which outputs and good practices generated by the alliance will be shared and have the potential to be mainstreamed in other higher education institutions with whom they cooperate beyond the alliance in Europe and beyond. • Dissemination: the proposal describes a clear dissemination plan of results, experiences and good practices put in place, and includes appropriate human and financial resources, activities, tools and communication channels including the use of social media to ensure that results, outputs and innovation triggered by the European University will be fully accessible and shared openly and effectively to a wide range of stakeholders during and after the EU funding period of the European Universities alliance. • Open Education and Open Science and Citizen Science resources: If relevant, and within the limits of existing national and European legal frameworks, the proposal describes how data, materials, documents, audiovisual and social media activity will be made available to make data searchable, accessible, interoperable, and re-usable (FAIR) to other higher education institutions and European Universities in Europe.

Award criteria		Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance		13	25
Quality	Project design and implementation	13	25
	Partnership and cooperation arrangements	13	25
Impact		13	25
Overall (pass) scores		**70**	**100**

Maximum points: 100 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 13/25 points.

Overall threshold: 70 points.

Proposals that pass the individual thresholds AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available call budget. Other proposals will be rejected.

10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements

If you pass evaluation, your project will be invited for grant preparation, where you will be asked to prepare the Grant Agreement together with the EU Project Officer.

This Grant Agreement will set the framework for your grant and its terms and conditions, in particular concerning deliverables, reporting and payments.

The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on Portal Reference Documents.

Starting date and project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 1)*. Normally the starting date will be after grant signature. Retroactive application can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Project duration: Normally 48 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

Milestones and deliverables

The milestones and deliverables for each project will be managed through the Portal Grant Management System and will be reflected in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.

Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The exact grant parameters *(maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc.)* will be fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 3 and art 5)*.

Project budget (maximum grant amount): see below table

Total number of HEIs which are full partners at the end of the EU grant A- (except for the cases in box B)	Max EU Grant
9 or more	14.40 MEUR
8	8.64 MEUR
7	7.56 MEUR
6	6.48 MEUR
5	5.40 MEUR
4	4.32 MEUR
3	3.24 MEUR
B- For topic 1 with expansion strategy	Max EU Grant
6 or less expanding to 8	12.80 MEUR
5 or less expanding to 7	11.20 MEUR
4 or less expanding to 6	9.60 MEUR
3 expanding to 5	8.00 MEUR

The maximum EU grants are based on the number of partners. For Topic 1 with expansion strategy, they take also into consideration the efforts linked to the integration of new members. For Topic 1 proposals willing to apply for the budget with an expansion strategy, an expansion of a minimum of 2 full partners is needed, except if the consortium expand from 8 to 9 partners.

However, it is entirely discretionary for each alliance to distribute in the proposal the total budget among the partners.

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

The grant will be a lump sum grant. This means that it will reimburse a fixed amount, based on a lump sum or financing not linked to costs. The amount will be fixed by the granting authority on the basis of the estimated project budget and a funding rate of 80%.

Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 3, art 6 and Annex 2)*.

Budget categories for this call:

  ― Lump sum contributions [24].

Specific cost eligibility rules for this call:

the lump sum calculation should respect the following conditions:

for lump sums based on estimated project budgets: the estimated budget must comply with the basic eligibility conditions for EU actual cost grants *(see AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6)*

Reporting and payment arrangements

The reporting and payment arrangements are fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 4 and art 21 and 22)*.

After grant signature, you will normally receive a **prefinancing** to start working on the project (float of normally **40%** of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/financial guarantee (if required) — whichever is the latest.

There will be no **interim payments**. There will be one or more **additional prefinancing payments** linked to a prefinancing report.

In addition, you will be expected to submit one or more progress reports not linked to payments.

Payment of the balance: At the end of the project, we will calculate your final grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, we will ask you (your coordinator) to pay back the difference (recovery).

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

⚠ Please be aware that payments will be automatically lowered if one of your consortium members has outstanding debts towards the EU (granting authority or other EU bodies). Such debts will be offset by us — in line with the conditions set out in the Grant Agreement *(see art 22)*.

Please also note that you are responsible for keeping records on all the work done.

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[24] Decision of 24 March 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions and unit contributions under the Erasmus+ Programme 2021-2027.

Pre-financing guarantees

If a prefinancing guarantee is required, it will be fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 4)*. The amount will be set during grant preparation and it will normally be equal or lower than the prefinancing for your grant.

The guarantee should be in euro and issued by an approved bank/financial institution established in an EU Member State. If you are established in a non-EU country and would like to provide a guarantee from a bank/financial institution in your country, please contact us (this may be exceptionally accepted, if it offers equivalent security).

Amounts blocked in bank accounts will NOT be accepted as financial guarantees.

Prefinancing guarantees are formally NOT linked to individual consortium members, which means that you are free to organise how to provide the guarantee amount *(by one or several beneficiaries, for the overall amount or several guarantees for partial amounts, by the beneficiary concerned or by another beneficiary, etc)*. It is however important that the requested amount is covered and that the guarantee(s) are sent to us in time to make the prefinancing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

If agreed with us, the bank guarantee may be replaced by a guarantee from a third party.

The guarantee will be released at the end of the grant, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Grant Agreement.

Certificates

Depending on the type of action, size of grant amount and type of beneficiaries, you may be requested to submit different certificates. The types, schedules and thresholds for each certificate are fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 4 and art 24)*.

Liability regime for recoveries

The liability regime for recoveries will be fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet point 4.4 and art 22)*.

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:
  – limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary up to their maximum grant amount*
  – unconditional joint and several liability — *each beneficiary up to the maximum grant amount for the action*
  or
  – individual financial responsibility — *each beneficiary only for their own debts*.

In addition, the granting authority may require joint and several liability of affiliated entities (with their beneficiary).

Provisions concerning the project implementation

IPR rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 16 and Annex 5):*
  – Rights of use on results: Yes.
  – Access to results for policy purposes: Yes.
  – Access rights to ensure continuity and interoperability obligations: Yes.

Communication, dissemination and visibility of funding: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 17 and Annex 5):*
  – Additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes.
Specific rules for carrying out the action: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 18 and Annex 5).*

EU restrictive measures

Yes.

Other specificities

N/a.

Non-compliance and breach of contract

The Grant Agreement (chapter 5) provides for the measures we may take in case of breach of contract (and other non-compliance issues).

For more information, *see* [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

11. How to submit an application

All proposals must be submitted directly online via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System. Paper applications are NOT accepted.

Submission is a **2-step process**:

a) **Create a user account and register your organisation**

To use the Submission System (the only way to apply), all participants need to [create an EU Login user account](#).

Once you have an EULogin account, you can [register your organisation](#) in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

b) **Submit the proposal**

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section (or, for calls sent by invitation to submit a proposal, through the link provided in the invitation letter).

Submit your proposal in 4 parts, as follows:

– Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online.
– Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file.
– Part C containing additional project data. To be filled in directly online.
– Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

The proposal must keep to the **page limits** (*see section 5)*; excess pages will be disregarded.

Documents must be uploaded to the **right category** in the Submission System otherwise the proposal might be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The proposal must be submitted **before the call deadline** (*see section 4*). After this deadline, the system is closed and proposals can no longer be submitted.

Once the proposal is submitted, you will receive a **confirmation e-mail** (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your proposal has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the IT Helpdesk webform, explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the Online Manual. The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System.

12. Help

As far as possible, *please try to find the answers you need yourself*, in this and the other documentation (we have limited resources for handling direct enquiries):

- Online Manual.
- FAQs on the Topic page (for call-specific questions in open calls; not applicable for actions by invitation).

- Portal FAQ (for general questions).

Please also consult the Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates.

Contact

For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the IT Helpdesk.

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: EACEA-EUROPEAN-UNIVERSITIES@ec.europa.eu .

Please indicate clearly the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates *(see cover page)*.

13. Important

⚠️ **IMPORTANT**

- **Don't wait until the end —** Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute **technical problems**. Problems due to last minute submissions *(e.g. congestion, etc.)* will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.

- **Consult** the Portal Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call and topic updates).

- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System —** By submitting the application, all participants **accept** to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the Portal Terms & Conditions.

- **Registration —** Before submitting the application, all beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners must be registered in the Participant Register. The participant identification code (PIC) (one per participant) is mandatory for the Application Form.

- **Consortium roles —** When setting up your consortium, you should think of organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems.

  The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding). **Subcontracting** should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). Subcontracting going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application.

- **Coordinator —** In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. Each beneficiary must sign a mandate to confer to the coordinating organisation the coordination responsibility and to act on their behalf during the project implementation. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.

- **Beneficiary –** are participating organisations that contribute actively to the achievement of the objectives of the alliance.

- **Affiliated entities** — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any).

  - **Associated partners** — Applicants may participate with associated partners (i.e. partner organisations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money). They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated.

- **Consortium agreement** — For practical and legal reasons it is recommended to set up internal arrangements that allow you to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (in all cases, even if not mandatory under the Grant Agreement). The consortium agreement also gives you the possibility to redistribute the grant money according to your own consortium-internal principles and parameters (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant money to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows you to customise the EU grant to the needs inside your consortium and can also help to protect you in case of disputes.

- **Balanced project budget —** Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully *(e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc)*. You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).

- **No-profit rule —** Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.

- **No double funding—** There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget (except under EU Synergies calls). Outside such Synergies calls, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances declared to two different EU actions.

- **Completed/ongoing projects —** Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).

- **Combination with EU operating grants —** Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice *(see [AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E](#))*.

- **Multiple proposals —** Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded a funding for them).

  Organisations may participate in several proposals.

  BUT: if there are several proposals for *very similar* projects, only one proposal will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw one of them (or it will be rejected).

- **Resubmission —** Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.

- **Rejection —** By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call Document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.

- **Cancellation —** There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.

- **Language —** You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, *see section 12*).

- **Transparency —** In accordance with Article 38 of the EU Financial Regulation, information about EU grants awarded is published each year on the Europa website.

  This includes:

  - beneficiary names
  - beneficiary addresses
  - the purpose for which the grant was awarded
  - the maximum amount awarded.

  The publication can exceptionally be waived (on reasoned and duly substantiated request), if there is a risk that the disclosure could jeopardise your rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.

- **Data protection —** The submission of a proposal under this call involves the collection, use and processing of personal data. This data will be processed in accordance with Regulation 2018/1725. It will be processed solely for the purpose of evaluating your proposal, subsequent management of your grant and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation and communication. Details are explained in the Funding & Tenders Portal Privacy Statement.