



## Position Paper on First Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe

September 2019

### **'European Universities' in Horizon Europe – a unique opportunity**

The emergence of the first 'European Universities' provides a unique opportunity for an unprecedented boost to the modernization agenda. Together, they can test, scale and transfer initiatives that make a strong contribution to international competitiveness and address future societal challenges. 'European Universities' can be instrumental in bringing about change in areas as wide reaching as research-driven education, upskilling talent, societal engagement, open innovation and entrepreneurship, responsible research and innovation and open science.

UNA Europa is committed to shaping the future of Europe. We believe Horizon Europe should capitalize upon the unique offer of 'European Universities' as:

- (a) **pioneers**: at the frontiers of innovative research, recognising and pursuing new lines of scientific inquiry;
- (b) **experimenters**: given the freedom to develop and test innovative formats of conducting interdisciplinary research and combining research with other missions of university;
- (c) **leaders**: striving to offer model solutions for other academic institutions and serve as a source of inspiration and ideas for their non-academic environment.

'European Universities' are perfectly positioned to take these roles as large, closely collaborating organizations, committed to interdisciplinary, multidimensional activities at international level. They have already demonstrated their strategy and willingness to become pioneers, experimenters and leaders in the European Research and Education Areas.

### **Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area initiatives**

Built on long-term strategies, mutual trust and in-depth collaboration, penetrating all levels from students and researchers to administrative staff and management, 'European Universities' can drive the structural and institutional change required to strengthen the European Research Area. To support this development, Horizon Europe should complement the Erasmus+ programme by supporting initiatives of a more sustainable nature under pillar IV. By combining their international reputations, 'European Universities' are ideally placed to raise the competitiveness of the European Research Area and increase its attractiveness for global talent.



To support 'European Universities' contributions to strengthening the European Research Area and its synergies with the European Education Area, UNA Europa proposes to explore the testing of open competition formats under Horizon Europe, including:

**(a) *Connecting all missions of the university:***

Promoting synergies between education, research, innovation and societal engagement by testing strategies for transferring research results into teaching and for enabling students to connect with research, innovation and societal engagement activities. For example, supporting international joint programmes aimed at the most promising Masters students in 3 tracks: research (offering research internships, support for research thesis), innovation (involvement in cooperation with industry), societal engagement (involvement in social programmes with NGOs and local governments).

**(b) *Da Vinci Gateways:***

Developing formats which serve to combine interdisciplinary research, specialized education, technology transfer and societal engagement in a particular field, defined bottom-up. The gateways would serve as transnational 'centres of excellence' not only in research, but would foster creativity and innovation across all dimensions of the mission of 'European Universities' and attract the best talent from around the world. The action should promote centres which foster cross-sectoral research and education, with a special impact - including social - of potentially created innovations of any kind.

**(c) *Future of ERA:***

Supporting pilots to articulate visions on ERA, for example pre-defined thematic calls how the ERA and EHEA can be more closely integrated and practically implemented. Such calls would provide essential knowledge to reform and enhance the European research, innovation, *and education* system.

**(d) *Promoting Sustainable Cooperation:***

Achieving the goals of the European Research Area requires long-term commitment towards institutional change. To match this commitment, Horizon Europe should recognize the need for the development of funding schemes which would support innovative, interdisciplinary and international research teams beyond the limits of a 3- or 5-year grant.

## **Clusters**

By promoting long-term programmes based on truly international and interdisciplinary education, research and innovation and cross-fertilization of knowledge across the sciences and humanities, 'European Universities' will contribute to the necessary knowledge and skills to create, design and implement the goals of the Horizon Europe clusters. Their structured, in-depth and long-term collaboration strategies and links with their respective ecosystems can provide the sustainability required to address the challenges outlined by the clusters.



UNA Europa stresses the importance given to the social sciences and humanities across the clusters in all their stages: from design to implementation and evaluation. We would welcome further the building of bridges between the clusters, especially the connection of Cluster 2 Culture, creativity & inclusive society to all other clusters.. This broad trans-sectoral approach is required to address the societal challenges of tomorrow.

UNA Europa reaffirms the need for a strong Cluster 2, demonstrating European commitment to the objectives that democracy, social transformations and culture represent. UNA Europa also calls upon the European Commission to invest in research that goes beyond traditional policy responses and common wisdom and that embrace the added value of transdisciplinarity and sustainable collaboration.

### **About UNA Europa**

The UNA Europa partners are Freie Universität Berlin, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna, University of Edinburgh, Uniwersytet Jagielloński w Krakowie, KU Leuven, Universidad Complutense de Madrid and Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. Having joined forces to create UNA Europa in 2018, the seven leading and research universities were selected among the first 'European Universities' under the Erasmus+ pilot call in June 2019 to implement their strategy for the European university of the future.

UNA Europa is committed to developing in-depth cooperation and long-term integration between the seven universities, focusing on excellent and innovative research and teaching, as well as boosting international opportunities for students and staff. Aiming to go beyond traditional geographical and disciplinary boundaries, the collaboration will result in a 'multi-campus' university model, ensuring that graduates and researchers are equipped to shape the future.

UNA Europa has launched four initial focus areas for collaboration are Cultural Heritage, Data Science & Artificial Intelligence, European Studies and Sustainability. These truly interdisciplinary areas promote cross-fertilization of knowledge across the sciences and humanities, across the seven campuses and with our societal stakeholders. UNA Europa's soon-to-be-established FutureUniLab will generate new concepts for international education and research, integrating them across the seven partners and fostering their transfer to other institutions.

Following one year of intensive collaboration between the UNA Europa partners, the UNA Europa association (vzw) was formally established in February 2019, with its official seat in Brussels. The goals of the UNA Europa association are to ensure the success and sustainability of the alliance and to actively contribute to the development of the European Higher Education and Research Areas.

We rest at the disposal of the European Commission and other stakeholders to discuss our ideas in more detail.



**For more information, please contact:**

Emily Palmer  
Secretary-General  
UNA Europa

Tel. +32 2 609 8839  
Mob. +32 472 584 463  
[emily.palmer@una-europa.eu](mailto:emily.palmer@una-europa.eu)  
[www.una-europa.eu](http://www.una-europa.eu)