



Joint European Degree label and a legal status for European universities alliances: 10 Erasmus+ projects to put them in place

Brussels, 31 January 2023

Today, Mariya **Gabriel**, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, launches 10 [Erasmus+](#) projects to test new forms of transnational cooperation between higher education institutions, as outlined in the [European strategy for universities](#) just one year ago. This is a key milestone for achieving the European Education Area.

Six of the selected projects will examine, test and facilitate the delivery of a joint European Degree label, a complementary certificate to the qualification of students graduating from joint programmes delivered in the context of transnational cooperation between several higher education institutions, based on a common set of co-created European criteria. The other four projects will allow alliances of higher education institutions, such as 'the European Universities', to test new forms of cooperation, such as a possible European legal status for these alliances.

The European Degree label is a step towards a joint European degree, spanning several EU Member States, and designed to encourage student mobility and cooperation. The label would reflect the skills and learning outcomes acquired by students who have followed a joint programme in several institutions and in several countries, in several languages, benefiting from the mobility opportunities of this programme and transdisciplinary pedagogical approaches. It would furthermore be complementary to the qualifications students obtain when graduating from joint programmes in the context of transnational cooperation between several higher education institutions, such as [European Universities](#).

This label would be issued on a voluntary basis as a certificate attesting learning outcomes, achieved as part of transnational cooperation among several institutions, and based on a common set of criteria. The selected projects working on the European Degree label will be carried out by higher education institutions, national and regional authorities and other stakeholders.

Among the ten projects selected today, four will allow alliances of higher education institutions to test new forms of EU cooperation, such as a possible European legal status for these alliances. The aim of this legal status is to give university alliances, on a voluntary basis, the latitude to act together, make common strategic decisions, experiment joint recruitment, design joint curricula or pool resources and human, technical, data, education, research and innovation capacities.

Each selected pilot project can receive a budget of up to €200 000 from the Erasmus+ programme for the duration of one year, which is expected to start in spring 2023. In cooperation with the relevant national, regional and/or institutional authorities, they will offer evidence for next steps and will elaborate proposals towards a possible joint European Degree and legal status for alliances in agreement with the higher education sector and Member States.

Any future step will not replace existing national solutions, and will aim to provide for complementary solutions, on a voluntary basis, to facilitate deeper transnational cooperation, fully respecting the principle of subsidiarity and institutional autonomy.

Background

The [European strategy for universities](#) presented on 18 January 2022 by the European Commission seeks to develop a genuinely European dimension, based on shared values, in the higher education sector. Building on this, the [Council conclusions on a European strategy empowering higher education institutions for the future of Europe](#), adopted on 5 April 2022, invites Member States and the Commission, to support alliances of higher education institutions, such as the 'European Universities':

- To explore common criteria that could lead to a potential European label for joint programmes. Later on, the possible design and delivery, on a voluntary basis, at national, regional or institutional level, of joint degrees at all levels, based on these co-created European criteria, could be envisaged, in accordance with the existing instruments of the Bologna Process; and

- To take steps to overcome the obstacles to a deeper, long-term and flexible transnational cooperation and design institutionalised cooperation instruments, based on a preliminary thorough assessment of their necessity, benefits and feasibility.

The [Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation](#), adopted by the Council on 5 April 2022, recommends that Member States examine and facilitate the delivery of a joint European Degree label to make it easier for higher education institutions engaged in transnational cooperation to provide joint programmes and award joint degrees, and to examine the need for and feasibility of institutionalised cooperation instruments, such as a possible legal status for alliances of higher education institutions.

This open and competitive [call for proposals](#) for European policy experimentation in higher education responds to this invitation and has a total budget of EUR 2 million. The call opened on 15 June 2022 and the deadline for applications' submission was 6 October 2022. An [online information session for applicants](#) took place on 28 June 2022.

For More Information

[Annex: overview of selected pilot projects](#)

[Commission Communication on a European strategy for universities](#)

[Commission Proposal for a Council recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation](#)

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Quotes:

I am very pleased to see us moving forward in big strides towards the vision we have of a Joint European Degree, cornerstone of our future European Education Area. With these projects, we address two important areas at the same time: making the cooperation between the institutions and universities ever smoother. And giving students a tangible added value to move from one campus to another. The fact that 90 higher education institutions participate says it all: there is real appetite across the sector to move things forward. I am delighted that we can help the process and look forward to seeing the results of the projects. The EU will become a major destination for Higher Education.
Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life - 31/01/2023

With the testing of the European Degree label and of the legal status for European universities alliances, we pursue the flagship initiatives of the European strategy for universities and take transnational cooperation to a new level of intensity and scope. I am happy to see that 90 higher education institutions of various sizes from all across Europe, and more than 20 European University Alliances, will collaborate with national and regional authorities and other relevant stakeholders to make the European Education Area a reality. The Commission will work closely together with the selected projects to explore and examine, hand in hand with the higher education stakeholders and national authorities, ways to make transnational cooperation easier for the benefit of Europe's students, higher education institutions, and their staff members.
Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth - 31/01/2023

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