

FORUM

MEMBER
MAGAZINE

Discussing international education



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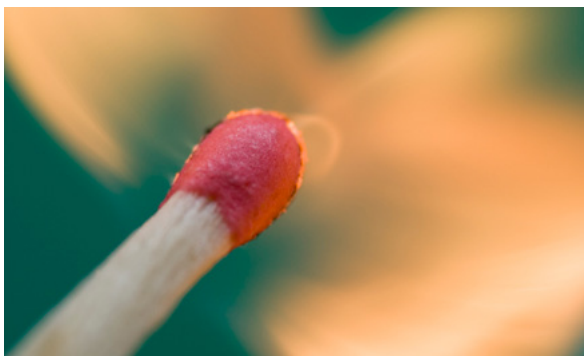
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09

“Joint doctoral programmes are ideal in acting as catalysts for structuring collaboration among higher education institutions”

JOINT DOCTORATES: CATALYSTS FOR COLLABORATION

20

“We need to reflect on what distinguishes the European degree from existing formats – otherwise we’ll just end up replicating or renaming what we already have”

IN CONVERSATION WITH IRINA FERENCZ



28

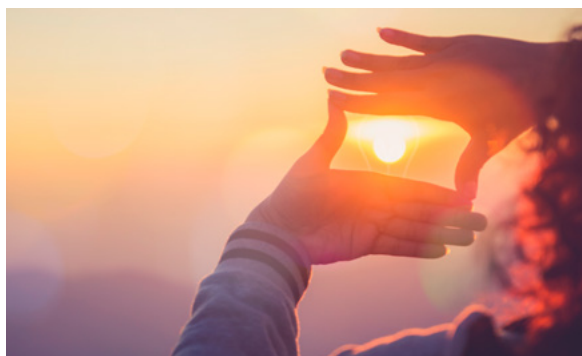
“The YUFE Student Journey gives students the opportunity to study simultaneously at 10 universities located in as many European countries”

YUFE: GIVING STUDENTS A SEAT AT THE TABLE

30

“My experience was indicative of the challenges the European higher education sector hopes to address regarding the delivery of joint degrees”

EUROPEAN DEGREES: A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE



EDITORIAL

Europe has been a global leader in the development of joint and collaborative programmes, and the Summer 2022 issue of *Forum* takes a deeper dive into this key aspect of international higher education. Known by many names – including joint degrees, dual and double degrees, and articulation programmes – collaborative programmes have flourished in Europe thanks to dedicated funding from the Erasmus+ programme. Where this programme initially supported joint Master's programmes with high levels of integrated study across borders, the establishment of the European Universities Initiative in 2019 has led to the development of new forms of collaborative programmes within Europe.

In many ways, European higher education has been preparing for a greater level of integration since the launch of the Bologna Process in the late 1990s, which led to alignment in degree structures across Europe and the adoption of shared instruments such as the European Credits Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). With the launch of the European Higher Education Area in 2010, European countries then committed to ensuring more comparable, compatible and coherent higher education systems. More recently, the intention to establish a European Education Area by 2025 includes a feasibility study for a 'European degree'.

Articles selected for this edition of *Forum* provide a range of perspectives on European collaborative programmes, as well as examples of programmes in action. Importantly for non-European readers (and perhaps for those in Europe who are keen for a refresher), a number of the articles provide an overview of the current policy landscape in Europe, including the history of key policy initiatives and a discussion of the European quality assurance



framework for these programmes. Other articles then outline perspectives from different stakeholders, such as participating students, universities of applied sciences and long-standing networks of European universities. Further contributions frame tangible examples of collaborative programmes (both in Europe and further afield) and highlight practical insights into how these programmes operate and the outcomes derived from them.

I am delighted that Irina Ferencz, Director of the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), agreed to be interviewed for this issue. Based in Brussels, ACA brings together 19 national-level organisations in Europe which promote and fund the internationalisation of higher education. As such, the Association is closely involved in supporting international cooperation in Europe, including by way of collaborative programmes. Although Irina regrets not participating in such a programme herself, her insights into the importance of this type of programming are compelling, not to mention her reflections on some of the barriers and hurdles along the way. Importantly,

Irina speaks about newer policy initiatives in this space, such as the European Universities Initiative and the European degree, and shares her thoughts on these developments.

At the outset of this issue, we hoped to answer questions on the evolution of European collaborative programmes and how they are perceived today by staff and students. We were also interested to know about quality assurance and governance. In reviewing the collection of articles that we've selected for this issue, I sense that we've done that and want to thank fellow members of the EAIE Publications Committee Lucia Brajkovic and Ragnhild Solvi Berg who joined me in reviewing submissions. A warm thank you as well to Mirko Varano, Chair of the EAIE Expert Community *European Collaborative Programmes*, who supported with the development and circulation of the call for proposals for this issue (in addition to writing an article).

I hope that you enjoy reading this edition of *Forum*.

— DOUGLAS PROCTOR, EDITOR
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Getting in touch with the Bologna Process as a student was the inspiration for Colin to build a career in international education and join EQAR. He loves long cycling tours and discovering regions this way.

CROSSING BOUNDARIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Of the European University alliances that have emerged so far, several of them are organised around tackling various aspects of the climate crisis and sustainable development. For the EURECA-PRO consortium, cooperation on sustainable consumption and production calls for working together not only across national and institutional borders, but also across disciplinary and cultural boundaries.

In autumn 2020, the EURECA-PRO consortium, which now consists of eight universities across Europe¹ and 24 associated partners, embarked on a journey to implement teaching, research and innovation related to responsible consumption and production. This was inspired by UN Sustainable Development Goal 12 – sustainable consumption and production – which expresses the necessity of reducing the material impacts of particularly the Western lifestyle.

This is a complex topic that requires us to cross disciplinary, cultural and geographic boundaries. As ecological economist Manfred Max-Neef argues, complex problems require complex thinking.² This kind of thinking can only be achieved when an understanding across disciplines and institutions is established – which is a challenge not only in teaching but also in research and outreach activities. How have we approached this challenge so far?

COMMUNICATION AND TEAMWORK

The key to successfully managing a project with partners from different countries, academic traditions and disciplines is



Image: Shutterstock

constructive communication across these boundaries. Our strong project lead has established communication routines such as a weekly coordinators' meeting. Beyond the exchange of ideas, these meetings

university management. It would be impossible to develop new structures for education, research and innovation without the participation and backing of the universities' rectors and vice-rectors.

The key to managing a project with partners from different countries, academic traditions and disciplines is constructive communication across these boundaries

provide an opportunity for everyone to be up to date on the latest developments and be included as an important part of the project. It is vital to create direct channels for handling challenges as they arise.

In this respect, it is important to be backed up by high-level support from

Together, they form the Board of Rectors, which is in constant dialogue with the project management.

The tasks within our work packages are addressed by representatives across countries and disciplines. Our collaboration therefore has to be structured and

organised in a way that is accessible for everyone. *Ad hoc* task forces have been founded to address specific issues, such as the construction of a virtual campus. This IT Task Force, for instance, includes representatives from each university and from very different disciplinary backgrounds, from the social sciences to IT.

As well as the collaboration between staff members, students also have a voice in the implementation of the European University. They form the student co-creation unit that is part of the governance group steering the strategic development of EURECA-PRO.

Monetary resources have been allocated to create a level playing field where everyone has the possibility to contribute equally to the project. Should a partner be lacking expertise for a certain task, the

other partners – particularly the project lead – help out with an exchange of knowledge with this partner.

CONFLICTS AND SYNERGIES

One challenge is that each participant in the consortium is both part of a university and part of the emerging European University. This can lead to conflicting interests and the creation of parallel structures. For instance, the broad innovation

the strengths of the universities involved and also lead to the creation of new research fields.

Legal barriers, such as differences in national regulation, are also an issue in the construction of joint research, teaching and outreach. The universities in the consortium are managed and regulated differently, and the problems arising from this still limit the creation of a truly European University. Efforts made by

broadly oriented universities, particularly their social science departments, have an equally strong voice in addressing responsible consumption and production.

We have already created common teaching, research and outreach content on responsible consumption and production, and we are working on defining this umbrella topic more concretely. While it is necessary to lead a constructive debate on the meaning of responsibility related to consumption and production, there is also an advantage to remaining quite broad in this common vision. In this way, a wide range of perspectives and academic backgrounds can be accommodated.

Easily accessible communication channels, high-level support and the well-balanced contribution of all partners are core aspects of EURECA-PRO. In this European University, we are overcoming barriers by focusing together on one common target and making great use of the synergies between our participating institutions.

—SARAH KOLLNIG

With responsible consumption and production, we have a topic that gives the consortium a common direction

agenda of EURECA-PRO for sustainable consumption and production could conflict with a purely technical focus on innovation. Newly established structures within the consortium, such as innovation academies, could be parallel endeavours that rival existing innovation efforts.

It is paramount to foster synergies between the European University and the existing university structures. A broad innovation agenda can complement purely technical approaches, and emerging innovation centres can build upon existing innovation activities. The same is true for teaching and research activities: any newly developed lecture series should build upon the vast pool of work produced by teachers and researchers in the consortium. Through this collaboration, new courses and teaching approaches emerge. The research activities build on

consortium members to overcome this need to be embedded in favourable conditions created at the level of national and European policymaking.

COMMON PATHWAY

EURECA-PRO unites more than 60,000 students and 11,000 staff members. It is a challenge to bring together this large number of people and their different perspectives and backgrounds. With responsible consumption and production, we have a topic that gives the consortium a common direction. Staff and students work on a common pathway towards reaching this goal.

We are building upon our existing strengths, which are specifically the technical aspects: four of the eight universities in the consortium are technical universities. But it is paramount that the more

1. The participating universities at the start were from Austria (University of Leoben), Germany (Technische Universität Bergakademie Freiberg, University of Applied Sciences Mittweida), Spain (University of León), Greece (Technical University of Crete), Romania (University of Petroșani) and Poland (Silesian University of Technology). We have since added an extra partner university from Belgium (Hasselt University). Together, we form the European University on Responsible Consumption and Production, EURECA-PRO.

2. Max-Neef, Manfred. (2005). Foundations of transdisciplinarity. *Ecological Economics*, 53(1), 5–16.

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The graphic features a background of a colorful mosaic with yellow, blue, and red tiles. Overlaid on this is a large, abstract shape composed of overlapping blue and purple organic forms. A thin black line curves through these shapes. Several smaller, isolated organic shapes in orange, red, and green are scattered around the main composition. The text 'EAIE | BARCELONA' is prominently displayed in the center, with '2022' below 'EAIE' and '13-16 SEPTEMBER' to the right of 'BARCELONA'.

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