FOREU4ALL
EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCES

D1.4

Evaluation of External Engagement I

FOREU4ALL
EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCES

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Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary 6
2. Introduction 7
3. EAB 9
3.1 Definition 9
3.2 Set-up and Formalisation 10
3.3 EAB Meetings 11
3.4 EAB Involvement in FOREU4ALL and Vice Versa 12
All EAB Members 12
Concrete Collaboration with Individual EAB Organisations: 13
3.5 Recommendations for the Future 18
3.6 Possible Expansion of the EAB 20
4. Higher Education Stakeholders 21
4.1 Definition 21
4.2 Set-up 22
4.3 Wider Sector Meetings 23
4.4 Wider Sector Involvement in FOREU4ALL 24
University networks 25
International Engagement 29
Other 30
4.5 Letters of Support / Memoranda of Understanding 31
4.6 Recommendations for the Future 33
5. Sister Projects 34
5.1 Future4Alliances 35
5.2 SPREAD EUI 36
5.3 SCOPE-HE 38
5.4 EUC-Voices 39
5.5 Recommendations for the Future 40
6. Inclusion of Non-Alliance HEIs and Individual Researchers 42
6.1 Inclusion of Non-Alliance HEIs 42
6.2 Collaboration with Scholars 46
6.3 Recommendations for the Future 48

7. Media Appearances 49
7.1 Evaluation of Media Coverage 51
7.2 Recommendations for the Future 52
8. Governance Assessment 54
8.1 Terms of Reference 54
8.2 Mechanics of External Engagement and Representation 55
8.3 Sectoral Adaption: Integrating SoE Alliances 56
8.4 Operational Realities & Challenges in External Engagement 57
Consensus vs. Diversity of Voices 57
Capacity Constraints and Representative Infrastructure 58
8.5 Recommendations for the Future 59
9. Conclusion and Going Forward 61
1. Enhancing Strategic Input and Guidance from the External Advisory Board (EAB) 62
2. Streamlining Media, Publication, and Public Statement Protocols 62
3. Balancing Representation Capacities and Optimizing Governance Mandates 63
4. Broadening Outreach and Fostering Transferability with Sister Projects 64
5. Executing Adaptive Governance and Stock-Taking Exercises 64
10. Annexes 65
Annex 1: EAB Meeting Notes 65
Annex 2: Guidelines for External Collaboration Requests 65

1. Executive Summary

Deliverable D1.4 provides a critical, two-year evaluation of the external engagement processes, governance structures, and strategic partnerships established by FOREU4ALL from November 2024 to October 2026. Operating fundamentally as a bridge and connector, the project functions as a strategic relational hub linking participating European Universities Alliances, external higher education stakeholders, non-Alliance Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and policymakers at European, national, and regional levels. Addressing initial evaluation feedback to move beyond high-profile launch events, the Deliverable integrates data from D2.2 and deploys a continuous framework of stakeholder meetings, EUI sister project collaborations, Policy Learning Labs, and targeted workshops to share best practices and build synergies across the higher education sector.

The report's core operational pillars encompass:

- Internal Governance & Alliance Integration
- The External Advisory Board (EAB)
- Wider Sector & "Sister Projects" Synergies
- Non-Alliance HEIs & Scholarly Outreach
- Media & Public Visibility

By evaluating these dimensions alongside internal governance mechanics and capacity constraints, D1.4 maps out concrete strategic recommendations to be implemented, including refined publication protocols, enhanced EAB assignments and collaboration flows, structured "sister projects" engagement, and upcoming mid-term stock-taking exercises to ensure sustainable, high-impact stakeholder engagement for the remainder of the project lifecycle and beyond.

2. Introduction

Deliverable D1.4 provides a comprehensive evaluation of the external engagement processes, governance structures, and strategic partnerships established by FOREU4ALL during the first two years of its lifecycle (November 2024-October 2026). Operating fundamentally as a bridge and connector, FOREU4ALL serves as a strategic entry point and relational hub linking participating Alliances, external higher education stakeholders, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) not participating in Alliances (non-Alliance HEIs), and European, national, and regional policymakers. The core focus of this deliverable is to critically analyse the processes and governance mechanisms through which the project interacts with external entities, systematically identify the diverse stakeholders engaged so far, and pinpoint possible gaps, adjustment needs, and concrete opportunities for future collaboration.

Crucially, this deliverable directly addresses feedback from the project's initial Evaluation Report, which highlighted the need for FOREU4ALL to move beyond high-profile launch and final events to establish continuous, deeper interaction with external stakeholders. To contextualize the real-world impact and thematic depth of these interactions, this report draws directly upon data, activity mapping, and concrete outputs outlined in Deliverable D2.2 (Report on topical group activities during the first year of the project). Together, D1.4 and D2.2 demonstrate how the project is operationalizing its role as an active bridge by deploying a full array of external engagement, combining regular meetings with higher education stakeholders, cooperation with other EU-funded “sister projects”, and the organisation of additional webinars, Policy Learning Labs (PLLs) (further describer in Deliverable 3.2) featuring external guests, and targeted workshops. These recurring and varied formats ensure a continual, structured sharing of best practices, information exchange and identification of possible synergies with the wider higher education sector throughout the entire duration of the project's lifecycle and beyond.

External representation and engagement within FOREU4ALL operate through a structured, multi-layered governance framework designed to combine broad bottom-up co-creation with executive oversight and political legitimacy. This deliverable examines the key pillars of FOREU4ALL's internal and external outreach architecture. Each of these is presented in more details in the subsequent sections but a brief summary is included below for easier access:

- **Internal Governance and Alliance Integration:** Grounding the community's external voice in a representative core, comprising the General Forum, the elected Forum Board, and full integration of Seal of Excellence (SoE) Alliances, to ensure shared decision-making, strategic alignment, and balanced co-ownership across all participating Alliances.
- **The External Advisory Board (EAB):** Comprising the "E4 Group" (EUA, ESU, EURASHE, ENQA) and the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), formalizing high-level strategic advice, policy reflection, and cross-sectoral dissemination.
- **Wider Higher Education Sector Networks:** Maintaining structured exchanges with a mapped network of 33 European higher education, research, and innovation organisations (e.g., The Guild, LERU, Coimbra Group, CESAER, ACA, EAIE) to align policy positioning and share best practices beyond the "Alliance bubble".
- **EUI "Sister Projects":** Building dedicated operational synergies with parallel EU-funded initiatives, most notably Future4Alliances, SPREAD EUI, SCOPE-HE, and EUC-Voices, to access complementary target groups (such as Member States and National Agencies), make use of relevant external experts, and thus maximize project outcomes.
- **Non-Alliance HEIs and Scholarly Communities:** Testing formats for transferability, including the launch of the FOREU4ALL Database of Good Practices, public thematic webinars, PLLs, and direct collaboration with research centres like CHEPS.

- **Media and Public Visibility:** Monitoring and coordinating external media appearances across specialized outlets (e.g., *NewsTank Academic*, *University World News*, *Science|Business*) to elevate the public discourse surrounding the European Universities Initiative while mitigating possible narrative risks or misunderstandings.

By critically evaluating these governance mechanisms alongside the internal dynamics supporting them, this report identifies key operational lessons and maps out clear opportunities for sustainable, high-impact stakeholder engagement to be built on in the second half of the FOREU4ALL project.

3. EAB

3.1 Definition

The External Advisory Board (EAB) is a governing body of FOREU4ALL that includes five key higher education organisations and student representation. The organisations represented are:

- EUA (European University Association);
- ESU (European Students' Union);
- EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education);
- ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education);
- ESN (Erasmus Student Network).

As described in the proposal, these five organisations are chosen as they are the four member of the so-called “E4 Group”, which serve as consultative members to the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG), advising on policy and designing the official quality assurance standards (ESG) for the European Higher Education Area. The FOREU4ALL External Advisory Board brings together the “E4 Group” (European University Association – EUA, the European Students’ Union – ESU, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ENQA and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education – EURASHE), as well as the Erasmus Student Network

(ESN), because of the important dimension of student mobility in Alliances. This restricted list of EAB members has been chosen to maintain a functional EAB (with limited number of members) while maximizing the community reach (HEIs, student communities, HE stakeholders, National Agencies and others).

The EAB members bring in valuable expertise and outreach potential. The EAB meets twice a year to advise on policy developments, priorities and initiatives of FOREU4ALL, including the position of the European Universities initiative in the broader European policy context and reflecting on key developments. Student representation and the European Degree Label are examples of important topics that are frequently discussed during EAB meetings. Moreover, structural engagement in FOREU4ALL initiatives is achieved through their ad hoc participation in Topical Groups (TGs) meetings, workshops, PLLs, and more. Through the set-up of the EAB, key external stakeholders, such as student communities, are directly involved in the governance of FOREU4ALL.

3.2 Set-up and Formalisation

FOREU4ALL is strengthening and formalising networks and activities that were already ongoing before, such as the collaboration with key stakeholders, including members of the EAB. Building upon this existing collaboration, EAB organisations have now been formally associated to the FOREU4ALL project. This status shows their trust, support and commitment to FOREU4ALL and its development.

The first EAB meeting was held on 2 December 2024, during the FOREU4ALL launch event. Here, all EAB members introduced their respective organisations, offered support, and shared their expectations for the Community of Practice (see Text Box 1 for first impressions). The project objectives and outline (e.g. Work Packages, Governance Framework) were also presented to ensure the community and the EAB are familiar with the governance, deliverables and milestones of FOREU4ALL and concrete opportunities for involvement.

Text Box 1: FOREU4ALL launch event

> "The launch of FOREU4ALL is a historic moment (…) building upon constructive collaboration among 560 higher education institutions (…) that's not a given in times of challenged collaboration and where transnational collaboration is not on the top of all agenda's (…) the EUA will bring in expertise to help" Anna-Lena Kulick (FOREU4ALL EAB member EUA) at the FOREU4ALL launch event (2 December 2024)

The exact place and role in the FOREU4ALL governance was developed together with the EAB members and defined in the FOREU4ALL Governance Framework (Deliverables 1.1, 1.2, 1.3).

3.3 EAB Meetings

The EAB has been meeting twice a year, with four meetings to date: on 2 December 2024 (online), 29 April 2025 (in person); 25 November 2025 (online); 23 June 2026 (in person). The EAB meeting notes can be found in Annex I.

In these meetings, EAB members reflected on the overall development and priorities of FOREU4ALL. Among other things, the EAB provided input to the FOREU4ALL Communication and Dissemination Strategy, the Governance Framework, engagement with SoE Alliances, collaboration with the wider sector and positioning of FOREU4ALL, and reflected on the FOREU4ALL Discussion Paper titled "European Universities Alliances: Beating Heart of Europe's Future". They also advised on fundamental policy developments, such as the sustainability of the European Universities Alliances Initiative, Alliance leadership, student representation, and funding models. Their input was brought forward to the Project Management Team and Forum Board for reflection and identification of concrete next steps and implementation.

3.4 EAB Involvement in FOREU4ALL and Vice Versa

Although the dedicated EAB meetings are important to reflect on the overall FOREU4ALL and EUI developments, structural engagement of the organisations in specific events, meetings, and initiatives is even more important to directly benefit from their expertise and outreach potential throughout the FOREU4ALL community and activities. There are numerous examples of their engagement in concrete FOREU4ALL initiatives, a selection of which can be found below:

All EAB Members

- **Feedback and advice:** all EAB members were briefed on the first draft of the Communication and Dissemination plan, reflected on the Governance Framework and the FOREU4ALL Discussion Paper.
- **Communication and Dissemination**: a link to share events and resources was shared with the EAB to enhance the cross-dissemination of relevant publications, events and other opportunities. Since the beginning of the project, multiple reports, participation opportunities and stakeholder consultations have been shared within the Community. To accommodate for the number of requests, the FOREU4ALL website was expanded to include a section dedicated to "Stakeholders", where the EAB also belongs, as a separate category in its News and Events and Reports & Statements domains, making it easier to search specifically for resources coming directly from the stakeholder community. Additional resources are also shared via regular Community Highlights published on the FOREU4ALL virtual space (operated under Microsoft Teams) 2-3 times each month.
- **Events**: There is a regular involvement of FOREU4ALL in events organised by organisations represented in the EAB, and vice versa. Some examples include the ESN conference on The Future is Erasmus (January 2026) or the EUA Funding Forum (October 2026), where Alliances were central to the programme. Other examples are provided below.

Concrete Collaboration with Individual EAB Organisations:

ESN

There is an obvious link between the FOREU4ALL Student-led Community TG and ESN, creating a direct space for exchange between Alliance student representatives and wider European student networks. Moreover, ESN and FOREU4ALL also collaborate at central level and through other TGs. For example, the strong focus on mobility in Alliances results in a highly relevant role for ESN (representing mobile students) in FOREU4ALL and offers concrete avenues for deeper engagement.

- **Regular moderator/speaker participation in events**: The FOREU4ALL WP1&WP3 Project Officer moderated a session at the big ESN meeting EGM Ancona 2025, and again at the ESN conference The Future is Erasmus on 27 January 2026. ESN collaborated directly with the Student-led Community TG, including as a partner organisation in the FOREU4ALL Student Workshop & Networking Event in Brussels in November 2025, where ESN contributed to a session on inclusion in higher education. ESN also participated in the FOREU4ALL workshop 3 on Community Engagement in Strasbourg in June 2026. Moreover, in April 2026, the Student-Led Community participated in ESN's Erasmus Generation Meeting in Split and hosted sessions aiming to raise awareness of European University Alliances among the wider student community.
- **Collaboration on surveys**: The ESN President presented the XV ESN survey at the May 2025 General Forum and FOREU4ALL supported the dissemination of the survey in Alliance constituencies. ESN supported FOREU4ALL data collection on the European Degree to ensure the inclusion of the student view. Moreover, the FOREU4ALL Central Office is part of the ESN Survey Expert Group, providing feedback and recommendations regarding the format and data included in the publication of survey results, alongside input for additional cross-analysis and recommendations for future survey rounds.

- **Active cooperation with the Student-led Community, Mobility, Diversity and Inclusion, Community Engagement, Communication & Dissemination, and Cooperation with Ukraine TGs:** To name just a few examples, ESN presented the results of their XVI Survey at FOREU4ALL Workshop 3 in Strasbourg (June 2026), showcasing the visibility of European Universities Alliances within the student community and collectively brainstorming concrete steps to further strengthen it. Moreover, ESN, alongside ESU and the Student-led Community TG, is currently in active contact with members of the Mobility Topical Group to prepare a follow-up to the Mobility Think Piece published on the FOREU4ALL website in July 2026. This follow-up piece aims to open up a collaborative policy dialogue student mobility experiences, addressing, among others, concrete administrative barriers and questions of student accommodation and credit recognition. Once finalised, the paper will be published on the FOREU4ALL website and shared with DG EAC to continue the open and productive discussion around this topic, providing concrete recommendations and best practices.

EUA

The EUA has extensively engaged with the European Universities Initiative from its inception. The Association contributes to shaping policies on Alliances and transnational cooperation, notably by participating in related working groups with the European Commission, Member States and other higher education stakeholders. Furthermore, EUA supports its members that wish to engage in transnational cooperation, both within and beyond the European Universities Alliances, through its wide-ranging expertise from quality assurance to joint educational provision, research and innovation, as well as governance, funding, leadership development and foresight. This active engagement, strong expertise and broad membership make the EUA a valuable organisation for FOREU4ALL.

- Relevant experts from the EUA secretariat collaborated with different TGs, such as the ALLIES TG, and their micro-credentials subgroup, the Student-led

Community TG, and the Digitalisation TG also in the context of the wider European Digital Education Hub where both representatives of the EUA as well as Alliance representatives jointly work towards an interoperable European higher education system.

- The EUA regularly participates as a speaker in FOREU4ALL workshops, webinars and Policy Learning Labs, such as the April 2026 PLL on sustainable funding.
- Collaboration on media appearances: When journalists approach FOREU4ALL on topics that EUA has specific expertise on, FOREU4ALL ensures that EUA is connected to the journalist responsible for the article as well. An example is this University World News article on funding models for Alliances.
- FOREU4ALL ensures the dissemination of relevant EUA reports and initiatives, for example final policy recommendations of EU co-funded "Staff development in learning and teaching at European universities" (STAFF-DEV) project.
- FOREU4ALL participates in relevant EUA initiatives and fora, for example the 2026 Funding Forum which had several sessions of particular relevance for European Universities Alliances. Findings from such events are subsequently shared with the Policy Dialogue Work Package, directly contributing to the organisation of follow-up workshops and PLLs, including a workshop on the Investment Pathway for European Universities Alliances, which is currently in the making.
- The FOREU4ALL Project Management Team contributed to the EUA SPHERE webinar on 19 November 2024. Even though it is just outside of the FOREU4ALL project lifetime, this contribution shows the relevance of FOREU4ALL for the EUA constituency already before its official formalisation.
- The EUA also accepted an invitation to contribute to the forthcoming publication on Alliance governance, in preparation by the Governance and Legal Frameworks TG.
- The ALLIES TG, focused on lifelong learning and microcredentials, organised a meeting with EUA's Director of Higher Education Policy to discuss micro-

credentials, lifelong learning frameworks, joint degree programmes, and alignment with the EU Union of Skills agenda and the role of Alliances within it.

- FOREU4ALL was invited to contribute to the higher education statement on the future Erasmus post 2028, which was coordinated by EUA. FOREU4ALL decided not to stay engaged in this initiative (see Deliverable 3.1 for more details).

EURASHE

EURASHE has been a strong supporter of the European Universities initiative since the beginning, bringing in the applied higher education dimension, fostering deeper collaboration between universities and industry partners, and enhancing the intersection between higher education and regional development and innovation.

- EURASHE supports the FOREU4ALL mission to promote collaboration among Alliances through its "Sounding Board for the European Universities Initiative". This informal grouping brings together Alliances active in the Applied Higher Education sector, providing a dedicated space to discuss key issues in the implementation and monitoring of Alliances. FOREU4ALL has a direct link to the Sounding Board and the FOREU4ALL Coordinator has been actively engaged in its meetings. An example of advice from the Sounding Board was the inclusion of SoE Alliances in the FOREU4ALL Community, which was taken up in Spring 2025.

ENQA

Promoting the quality assurance of Alliances, both in policymaking and implementation, is a key topic for all European Universities Alliances. ENQA is very well positioned to support these exchanges and give advice on developments and enhancements regarding quality assurance of Alliances and Alliance initiatives.

- ENQA is in a particularly good and productive collaboration with the European Degree and joint programmes TG and Quality Assurance TG. For example, ENQA and quality assurance agencies participated in the FOREU4ALL workshop on the European Degree & Joint Programmes and Quality Assurance workshop (Venice,

3-5 December 2025). They have also co-organised multiple joint working sessions focused on streamlining internal and external QA procedures for European joint degrees and aligning alliance-level evaluation mechanisms.

- Moreover, the Implementation and Innovation in quality assurance through peer learning (IMINQA) project report (April 2025) was likewise disseminated within the FOREU4ALL Community.

ESU

ESU actively advocates for student rights, democratic governance, and genuine inclusion and democratic participation of students within the European Universities Alliances. Given that the student body's perspective is central to transnational campus developments, ESU is a key partner for FOREU4ALL.

- There is a strong cooperation with the Student-led Community TG. For example, the FOREU4ALL TG Chairs are part of the ESU Alliance Steering Committee, actively exchanging with ESU colleagues on topics of primary policy interest, bringing in experiences and specific challenges from Alliances' everyday operations.
- ESU established a place where the student representatives from all higher education institutions forming the European Universities Alliances can share their experiences, struggles and best practices to enhance student rights and amplify their voices. These exchanges take place under the auspices of the "Conference of the student bodies of the European alliances of higher education institutions". FOREU4ALL supported the set-up of this conference and its Student-led Community TG actively contributes to it.
- FOREU4ALL and ESU regularly participate in each other's events. For example, in the context of the collaboration with Community Engagement TG as part of the INSPIRE project. The project aims to support policy makers and higher education institutions in the process of implementing the principles and guidelines for the social dimension in the EHEA (PAGs). Moreover, ESU collaborated with the Student-Led Community TG in the November 2025 to organise the FOREU4ALL

Student Workshop & Networking Event in Brussels, including a joint session on inclusion in higher education. In May 2026, the Student-Led Community TG also contributed to the promotion and co-organisation of ESU's third Conference of the Student Bodies of the Alliances in Malta and delivered sessions on democratic student participation.

- ESU also participated in the FOREU4ALL workshop 3 on Community Engagement in Strasbourg in June 2026.
- Alongside ESN and the Student-led Community TG, ESU is currently collaborating with the Mobility TG on a follow-up Think Piece, directly focusing on the student experience. More information is available above in the section on ESN.
- ESU is also making an active use if FOREU4ALL's outreach potential among Alliances to share relevant resources (e.g. reports, events, opportunities for participation) that are further disseminated via FOREU4ALL's monthly community updates and on its website.

3.5 Recommendations for the Future

The regular exchanges between the EAB and the FOREU4ALL community served as a very effective instrument for external engagement. Building upon its independent expertise, diverse perspective and strong links to the wider ecosystem, the EAB is an instrumental governing body for strengthening FOREU4ALL's collaboration with the wider sector.

The EAB helps to ensure FOREU4ALL's activities and focus remain relevant, credible and connected to the needs of higher education stakeholders beyond the Alliance community. This is done in a structured way, both through their formal place in the FOREU4ALL governance and their engagement in community activities. Mechanism through which external actors can challenge assumptions, identify emerging needs, validate results, and help translate project knowledge into practical value helps to build the bridge between Alliances' innovative practices and their longer-term uptake.

Concrete examples of this impact are the engagement of EAB members in FOREU4ALL workshops, Topical Group meetings and advice on policy developments but, as shown above, can take on other forms as well. The recognition of the growing role of FOREU4ALL as a Community of Practice is also being increasingly recognised, as evidenced in Text Box 2.

Text Box 2: Recognition of FOREU4ALL by EAB members

> "If you want to talk with the Alliances, you call FOREU4ALL." Thomas Jorgensen, FOREU4ALL EAB member EUA at the 23 June 2026 EAB meeting

However, despite initial successes, the expertise of EAB members could be even more integrated into FOREU4ALL. Building upon the regular interactions that are already taking place, the independent expertise can be used even more to test the relevance and applicability of FOREU4ALL's activities, anticipating barriers of uptake and strengthening the pathways through which results can reach policymakers, practitioners, society and other relevant communities. Defining concrete needs for advice in anticipation of an EAB meeting could enhance the concrete added value of the EAB potential for FOREU4ALL needs. Structured "homework" for the EAB members will enable them to provide valuable advice. WP1 has identified this as one of its key priorities and will coordinate further steps to implement necessary changes for the second half of the project.

Further promoting the EAB expertise and potential among TGs via regular reminders to TG Chairs could also support a more structured engagement. All the Topical Groups must be regularly reminded regarding the availability and engagement mandate of the EAB expert pool, establishing a clear role regarding how and when they can leverage the Board's feedback. A brief 1-pager outlining the main trends, cross-synergies, and basic data about all TGs shared with the EAB to give feedback on could be a good way forward. Such a summary of TG reports will help EAB members to identify overarching trends and

opportunities for cross-collaboration. WP2 is currently working on providing such summaries based on the annual activity reports submitted by all Topical Groups and should be able to share these with the EAB in late autumn of 2026.

The active contact with EAB members will be continued, including through the collaboration with TGs, cross-sharing of events and relevant resources and others. However, a more active engagement, especially from some EAB members, could be envisioned and encouraged. For example, there are clear links between organisations such as EURASHE and the TG on Regional Innovation Ecosystems that will be explored to further strengthen EAB's involvement in the day-to-day activities of FOREU4ALL.

3.6 Possible Expansion of the EAB

The possible addition of new members to the EAB was discussed both within the Project Management Team and with the EAB in the summer of 2026. The exchange with organisations beyond the five EAB members (see next chapter) is seen as crucial, however, the consensus is that it is too early to formally expand the EAB at this stage, as the existing setup is manageable and the EAB is still actively defining its own operational workflow.

The EAB reflected that, if it decides to expand in the future, it might be beneficial to shift the focus away from adding more representative stakeholder bodies. Instead, it might be more beneficial to target individual experts acting in their personal capacity, specifically institutional practitioners (e.g. a Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs or a Director of International Office) who deal with the practical, daily realities of Alliances and are closely aware of concrete challenges related to it, such as budget cuts and other issues. This could provide FOREU4ALL with a valuable on-the-ground perspective and help explain why certain developments are not awakening desired urgency. This recommendation will be discussed in the FOREU4ALL Project Management Team in the context of future evolution of the FOREU4ALL governance in the second half of the project lifecycle and beyond.

4. Higher Education Stakeholders

The organisations involved in the FOREU4ALL EAB are only a fraction of the organisations representing the higher education sector. Strong links with the wider sector are key for FOREU4ALL to enable Alliances to share good practices and experiences with the wider sector. The aim of fostering these interactions and collaborations is to reach beyond the "Alliance bubble", strengthening the role-model potential of European Universities Alliances and encouraging a wider uptake of its innovative activities by the broader sector.

Next to their outreach potential, wider sector organisations bring in valuable expertise on the position of the European Universities initiative in the broader European policy context, making reflections on strategic developments, such as the investment pathway, national support for Alliances and other topics of broader interest, particularly important.

Depending on mutual needs, FOREU4ALL meets once or twice a year with wider sector representatives to seek their advice and identify possible synergies regarding latest policy developments and priorities and initiatives related to the activities of FOREU4ALL. Moreover, structural engagement in FOREU4ALL activities is achieved through the stakeholders' active engagement in TGs, workshops, PLLs, and more. Thanks to the set-up of the wider sector network, key external stakeholders, including university representations, gained direct contact with FOREU4ALL, further broadening mutual collaboration.

4.1 Definition

All FOREU4ALL full and associated partners were asked to identify networks/sector organisations in the field of higher education to map the relevant stakeholders in this field. A total of 33 organisations were listed, and this group forms the basis of the FOREU4ALL outreach activities to the wider sector. Outreach is done primarily through e-mail updates and invitations to annual/bi-annual wider sector meetings to discuss the

latest developments in the respective organisations and overall policy changes regarding European Universities Alliances and the higher education sector as a whole.

4.2 Set-up

The group of wider sector organisations is an informal group and can evolve over time through the addition of new partners. The current list of organisations can be consulted in Table 1 below.

Table 1: European Higher Education, Research & Innovation Organisations

Abbreviation	Full name
ACA	Academic Cooperation Association
AEC	Association Européenne des Conservatoires
Alianza 4 Universidades	Alianza 4 Universidades
AURORA	Aurora Network
BFUG	Bologna Follow-Up Group
Business Europe	Business Europe
CESAER	Conference of European Schools for Advanced Engineering Education and Research
Coimbra Group	Coimbra Group
EAEA	European Association for the Education of Adults
EAIE	European Association for International Education
EARMA	European Association of Research Managers and Administrators
EIT	European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT and EIT KICs)
ELIA	European League of Institutes of the Arts
ENIHEI	European Network of Innovative Higher Education Institutions
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ERRIN	European Regions Research and Innovation Network
EUF	European University Foundation
EuroTech	EuroTech Universities Alliance

EUSEA	European Science Engagement Association
gE	GaragErasmus Foundation
GIURI	The Informal Network of the Italian R&I community in Brussels
IAU	International Association of Universities
IGLO RTD	Informal Group of R&D Liaison Offices
LERU	League of European Research Universities
LLL Platform	Lifelong Learning Platform
Science Europe	Science Europe
The Guild	The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities
UAS4Europe	UAS4Europe
UNICA	Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe
UnILiON	University Liaison Offices Network
UNIMED	Mediterranean Universities Union
UUKi	Universities UK
YERUN	Young European Research Universities Network

4.3 Wider Sector Meetings

FOREU4ALL meets with the wider sector organisations on an annual or bi-annual basis. Past meetings took place on 24 April 2024 (in person), 25 November 2025 (online), 23 June 2026 (in person). On average, 15-20 organisations are represented at each of these meetings. The meetings are generally focused on strategic stocktaking, navigating shifting policy landscapes, and enhancing collaboration across the European Universities Alliances and the wider higher education sector. One and a half years into the existence of the FOREU4ALL initiative, the meetings provide an essential forum to address key policy updates related to the Alliance Initiative, spanning funding sustainability of the Alliances, institutional transformation, impact, interoperability, or the European Degree Label.

The expectations and objectives regarding FOREU4ALL's focus are also discussed, alongside the involvement of university discussions when alignment would help advance

policy objectives of collective interest. European policy developments, such as the European Parliament's report 'A new vision for the European Universities alliances' and the national contexts/developments are also evaluated, identifying spaces for collective action and cross-synergies. Topics like the European Degree, long-term expectations regarding the European Universities initiative, a collective understanding of the impact that Alliances are expected to deliver, the regulatory and funding environment and its risks, such as to the autonomy of universities, and the research and international dimension of Alliances have been discussed at past meetings and continue to make a regular occurrence as their importance persists. Also, these meetings offer the possibility to discuss concrete future initiatives/events, which allows for collective coordination, avoiding of clashing dates and identification of fitting speakers and opportunities for cross-dissemination.

The EAB reflected also on the wider sector meetings in June 2026 and noted the growing trust in the wider network vis-a-vis FOREU4ALL, which has not been present at the beginning. A central theme at the June 2026 wider sector meeting was the collective agreement that there is strategic interest in continuing collaboration and possibly expanding it to a more expert level, be it specialised workshops or other opportunities for direct engagement. The role of FOREU4ALL as a critical bridge and Community of Practice was recognised. Its ability it to use real-time evidence to inform policy development continues to ensure its role as an important entry point into the world of the Alliances and a strategic partner to further engage with.

4.4 Wider Sector Involvement in FOREU4ALL

The wider sector values regular updates about the main developments in the Alliances and collective initiatives, such as reflecting on the FOREU4ALL Discussion Paper or the launch of the Good Practice Database. Wider sector organisations are also able to submit event invitations, activities or initiatives for dissemination via a dedicated submission form, which are then shared directly on the FOREU4ALL website and calendar or via regular Community Highlights on Teams. FOREU4ALL also manages an

email list to keep the wider sector organisations updated about relevant developments. This way, resources are shared in a regular and structured manner and allow for a quick and concrete follow-up.

The wider sector is also able to identify FOREU4ALL experts as speakers for events and vice versa. In the past two years, there has been a continuous and growing interest in the Alliances and FOREU4ALL's activities. This might be (partly) attributed to FOREU4ALL's presence and active participation, strengthening its position as a bridgebuilder between the wider education sector and the world of the Alliances. Examples include the annual ACA 'What's New in Brussels' event and The Guild's paper presentation on Pilots without Pathways (January 2026). Also, Topical Group experts are also regularly sought after for various stakeholder events, such as the participation of the ALLIES TG micro-credentials subgroup at the Amsterdam Micro-Credentials Masterclass 2026. However, the overall picture is much more varied. There are dozens of examples where the wider sector worked together with FOREU4ALL for the mutual benefit of both. Here below is a collection of concrete, but non-exhaustive, examples:

University networks

There exists a strong collaboration with several university networks, as FOREU4ALL depends on their advocacy voice for a strong future for the European Universities initiative. Given FOREU4ALL's active engagement in policy dialogue around Alliances, it is important to be aware of initiatives and developments on both sides to strengthen our collective impact and make sure that the higher education sector keeps thriving. It is convenient that many university networks and the FOREU4ALL WP1 (Management and Coordination) and WP3 (Policy Dialogue) colleagues are primarily based in Brussels. This ensures close links and exchange of information thanks to regular meetings at events, in hallways or on the streets of the EU capital.

Concrete examples of collaboration are the FOREU4ALL Forum Board Chair and FOREU4ALL Co-Coordinator, who are also the Vice-Chair and Chair of the Coimbra Group's Executive Board. This dual role helps to align initiatives and common messaging.

Collaboration with **The Guild** has also been very strong. Jan Palmowski, the Secretary-General, participated at two Policy Learning Labs and as a keynote panellist at the 2nd FOREU4ALL "Workshop Aligning Project Management and Impact" in Granada (15-17 April 2026), bringing an external higher education stakeholder perspective into discussions on Alliance impact, transformation and project management. FOREU4ALL also participated in The Guild's event on European Universities Alliances in January 2026 around their paper "Pilots without Pathways".

Another example is the keynote of the FOREU4ALL coordinator at the UNICA Days in February 2025, organised by the **UNICA** network.

FOREU4ALL experts also work together with expert groups from wider sector organisations on specific topics. For example. The FOREU4ALL Impact Topical Group contributed to a **CESAER** Task Force Benchmark Meeting on 11 September 2025, in the context of the CESAER workshop "Exploring Performance Assessment of European Universities Alliances of Science & Technology", presenting Alliance approaches to impact assessment. The workshop subsequently informed CESAER's position paper "*Design principles for long-term performance and impact assessment of European University Alliances*".

Another example of such focused collaboration is between FOREU4ALL and the **European University Foundation** (EUF). Invited experts from EUF/Erasmus Without Papers (EWP) participated in the IT & Digitalisation TG meeting on 16 December 2025; the expert session addressed EWP developments, multilateral inter-institutional agreements, digital nominations, the European Student Card initiative and the transition from physical cards to digital wallets. EUF also contributed to the FOREU4ALL Student

Workshop & Networking Event in Brussels in November 2025 through a seminar on mobility funding mechanisms.

ACA

The Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) is a membership organisation of national-level organisations which promote and fund internationalisation of higher education. This strong rootedness at the national level is important for the outreach of Alliance activities beyond the Alliance community. Also, they have important knowledge of national developments relevant for Alliances. For example, FOREU4ALL shared the ACA report on the landscape of national support available to HEIs funded through the EUI as well as Seal of Excellence holders and invited ACA to present its findings at a dedicated Policy Learning Lab. The report suggests ways forward for the Alliance community, illustrating the specific support needed at national level. FOREU4ALL also participated in several events organised by ACA, such as the 'What's New in Brussels' event in January 2026, to reflect on the positioning of Alliances for the next EU funding of the ERA. However, the cooperation between FOREU4ALL and ACA goes beyond exchanges on governance level also to cooperation with Topical Group experts. Among others, TG Cooperation with Ukraine contributed to the ACA seminar on "What's new in Brussels", showcasing strategic institutional cooperation models with universities from accession and enlargement countries who are at the moment not affiliated to any Alliances.

EAIE

The European Association for International Education (EAIE) provides a platform to connect to HEIs outside of Alliances and is therefore a relevant partner for FOREU4ALL. FOREU4ALL collectively participated at EAIE 2025, with 35+ Alliances, 20+ sessions and a dedicated FOREU4ALL event with the European Commission as part of the programme. Moreover, a joint FOREU4ALL article was published at the EAIE Forum and selected as an Editor's Pick. Also, at EAIE 2026, 36 European Universities Alliances came together, showcasing their impact through more than 40 sessions, including topical mini sessions

at the European Commission's booth targeting Higher Education Institutions outside of the Alliances. FOREU4ALL's Work Package 4 colleagues have been particularly instrumental in coordinating the participation of European Universities Alliances at both 2025 and 2026 EAIE conference editions. These sessions provided a further opportunity to showcase the expertise of FOREU4ALL TGs and other representatives and to break out of the "Alliance bubble" on topics of wider interest, be it cooperation with Ukrainian partner universities or discussions about impact assessment frameworks. Furthermore, EAIE requested information about the US engagement in Alliances for a Transatlantic workshop in Washington focused on collaboration between universities from the US and Europe. The event was hosted by IIE and DAAD Brussels and the Association of International Education Administrators (EIEA) were also involved.

However, both EAIE conferences showed that attracting the interest and participation of non-Alliance HEIs does not come naturally. Despite the organisation of dedicated sessions or activities, including two mini sessions collectively held by the "EUI sister projects" with the support of European Commission's colleagues, only a small number of non-Alliance higher education institutions actually joined the discussion, further increasing the risk of creating silos or eco-chambers.

EHESO

The European Higher Education Sector Observatory (EHESO) is a user-centred data and information platform on the higher education sector in Europe, serving as a benchmarking tool for Higher Education Institutions. EHESO can play a crucial role in streamlining monitoring and showcasing the longitudinal impact of Alliances. To ensure mutual understanding of needs for impact monitoring, and developments of indicators that help to capture Alliance impact and institutional transformation, close collaboration between FOREU4ALL and EHESO is key.

To strengthen and further nurture this strategic partnership, FOREU4ALL became part of the EHESO Policy Advisory Board, ensuring that overall developments respond to the

needs of the Alliances and that they are informed at an early stage about any upcoming EHESO initiatives or data collection rounds. Moreover, on 8 May 2026, the FOREU4ALL coordination and Impact and Project Management TGs participated in an exploratory FOREU4ALL-EHESO meeting on monitoring European University Alliances, together with representatives from DG EAC and EACEA, to explore potential areas for further collaboration. This resulted in the co-organisation of the workshop *"Monitoring the European Universities Initiative: EHESO's contribution to the evidence base"* on 13 October 2026, which FOREU4ALL helped co-create and co-facilitate.

Moreover, the Student-Led Community TG contributed to an EHESO workshop in September 2025 by moderating the breakout session "Contextual information & Synergies" linked to the launch of the European Student Observatory, bringing the perspectives of Alliance students into the discussion. They have since also been engaged in the testing of the EHESO's upcoming Student Hub and Conference on Student-Centred Higher Education in November 2026.

International Engagement

There is high global interest in the European Universities Initiative and FOREU4ALL presents a natural entry-point to find information. This is shown, among others, through the engagement with SCOPE-HE project focusing on the ASEAN region (see below), participation of global university representatives in FOREU4ALL Policy Learning Labs and workshops, and the EAIE request for information about the US engagement in Alliances for a Transatlantic workshop in Washington.

Moreover, on 22 September 2026, the FOREU4ALL Forum Board Chair joined a delegation led by EVP Mînzatu to the USA in the framework of the UN General Assembly. It took place in Boston, with visits to MIT and Harvard. During this mission, the FOREU4ALL Forum Board Chair had a chance to showcase the added value of the European Universities Alliances and promote possible collaborations, to a high degree of interest of all participants.

Other

There are many more relevant stakeholder organisations and external engagement activities, some of which are listed below:

- In June, FOREU4ALL hosted a webinar "Navigating Pension Barriers and the Fifth Freedom" delivered by **ECAS (European Citizen Action Service)** and **RESAVER** for the FOREU4ALL Community in the context of vital services for mobile research staff.
- The ALLIES TG has a strong collaboration with the European Universities Continuing Education Network (EUCEN). The Vice-Chair of the ALLIES Group is the EUCEN President, and findings from the Erasmus+ SAMUELE Project were presented in one of the meetings, focused on national university lifelong learning policies across 18 countries and 100+ universities. Moreover, ALLIES and EUCEN work together to raise the importance of lifelong learning in the context of the Union of Skills.
- TG European Degree & Joint Programmes teamed up with the **PPMI Group** for structured joint consultation sessions and breakout workshops to evaluate assessment approaches and operational criteria for the Joint European Degree Label.
- TG Internationalisation and Global Outreach has good cooperation with **SwissCore** on the inclusion of Swiss partners in Alliances, which will be further exploited for the purposes of an upcoming Policy Learning Lab Deep Dive focused on Switzerland.
- TG Multilingualism and Multiculturalism has launched cooperation with the **European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education** (CercleS). This joint initiative aims to design a shared European policy framework for language teaching, staff training, and intercultural competence in transnational higher education.
- TG IT & Digitalisation started collaboration with the **European Campus Card Association** (ECCA), fostering shared participation and expert exchanges linking

university digital identity and verifiable credentials with the ECCA conference. They have also contributed to expert session and technical exchanges regarding **Erasmus Without Paper** (EWP), digital nominations, and transitioning physical student cards to digital wallets (**eduTAP**).

- TG Regional Innovation Ecosystems have been very active in engaging external experts, be it a keynote address by Ewa Chomicz from **ERRIN** (European Regions Research and Innovation Network) on 25 years of networked regional policy collaboration and practical mechanisms for regional stakeholder co-creation or a round table discussion during the SUNRISE Alliance meeting with **EURADA** (European Association of Development Agencies) and regional external experts to align on the topics of regional value creation, Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3), and long-term regional and national policy pathways.
- TG Student-Led Community has also established contacts with other student-led organisations, including **SET** and **Erasmus by Train**.
- The **European Intellectual Property Office** (EIPO) has reached out to FOREU4ALL to explore synergies and concrete avenues for mutual collaboration. We are currently in the process organising a collective webinar where the work of the EIPO and FOREU4ALL will be presented, with the participation of relevant Topical Groups (e.g. R&I, Regional Innovation Ecosystems and others) for direct follow-up.
- There is also a growing interest from single institutions, such as the **Norwegian University of Science and Technology** (NTNU) Brussels Office to organise joint webinars and other events, inviting FOREU4ALL representatives to present its activities and share latest policy updates surrounding the Alliance Initiative.

4.5 Letters of Support / Memoranda of Understanding

FOREU4ALL sees an increasing demand from external organisations to support initiatives and collaborate in activities, such as Letters of Support, Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and other collaboration requests. It is positive that FOREU4ALL is recognised as a strong brand and strategic body for collaboration. These requests showcase the value

of FOREU4ALL in the wider sector and the positive potential of collaborating with the Alliance community. To manage the requests, FOREU4ALL developed clear and lightweight **Guidelines for External Collaboration Requests** to help evaluate and respond to such requests in a consistent and structured manner (see Annex II for more details).

Examples are a signed MoU between the FOREU4ALL and **LIBER** formalising cooperation around the role of libraries in Europe and strengthening the connection with the wider European library and open science community. The aim of this collaboration is to align Open Science training, joint digital repository infrastructure, and policy development. LIBER also participated in the 9 October 2025 FOREU4ALL webinar on European networking opportunities for academic, national and specialised libraries, which explored opportunities for collaboration, professional development, advocacy and participation in European projects. LIBER was also represented in the FOREU4ALL Workshop 4 on the sharing of research infrastructures, held in Poitiers on 28-29 October 2026. Moreover, **SPARC Europe** participated alongside LIBER and FOREU4ALL in the 9 October 2025 webinar on European networking opportunities for academic, national and specialised libraries, sharing opportunities for engagement with European-level professional networks and initiatives.

There have also been a number of requests concerning Letters of Support for other Erasmus+ funded projects in the domain of higher education. For example, **garagErasmus** requested a Letter of Support for an Erasmus project Erasmus City+ focused on student housing. Another example would be the ACHIEVE project on strengthening the effective integration and promotion of Virtual Exchanges (VE) and Blended Intensive Programmes (BIP) within European Universities Alliances.

However, as explained in the attached guidelines, FOREU4ALL does not support all requests coming its way. For example, a request by **RESAVER** for a Letter of Support signed by the General Forum was only disseminated in the Community for the consideration of individual members, since it lacked a strong focus on the Alliances

(compared to other HEIs). As mentioned above, a webinar on mobility and social rights of researchers and academic staff was organised instead with the support of ECAS, as a way to showcase RESAVER's services and open up a community discussion on a topic of mutual interest.

4.6 Recommendations for the Future

Drawing from the examples listed above, the wider sector clearly finds the way to the FOREU4ALL Community (and vice versa). This happens both at the central as well as the expert (TG) level, since engagement in events, expert meetings, dissemination of initiatives, reports and others keeps thriving. Wider sector meetings are always well attended, showing the relevance of such collective exchanges.

The growing understanding and trust in FOREU4ALL as a complementary actor in the higher education network is also a proof of this effective collaboration. From initial misunderstanding of the possible added value of FOREU4ALL, in June 2026 we arrived at a collective agreement that there is a strategic interest in continuing with this collective collaboration (see notes in Annex I). The role of FOREU4ALL as a critical bridge and Community of Practice, offering direct access to 20 TGs, 2000+ experts and the full Alliance community from coordinator to expert levels, allows for the use of real-time evidence necessary for informing relevant policy development, which further strengthens FOREU4ALL's value as an important entry point into the world of the Alliances.

Finally, the growing number of MoUs and Letters of Support also show that FOREU4ALL is seen as a strategic body for collaboration. These requests are a living proof of the visibility of FOREU4ALL in the wider sector and the potential that these organisations and other stakeholders see in collaborating with the broader Alliance community.

However, promoting the wider sector expertise and potential among Topical Groups could benefit from an even more structured engagement. It is necessary to remind the Topical Groups that the wider sector organisations exist as a pool of experts, and it is

necessary to establish a clear mandate regarding how and when they can leverage their feedback. A summary of the TG reports will help wider sector organisations to identify overarching trends and cross-synergies and could serve as an ideal touchpoint for wider sector organisations to give feedback on. As mentioned above, these summaries are currently being prepared by WP2 based on Topical Groups annual reports and should be available in the next few months.

Moreover, the focus of the past years has primarily been on the higher education sector. However, the focus and work of the Alliances is broader than that. Service to the wider society, enhancing transnational cooperation, fostering Europe's youth and people, strengthening democracy and European values, and engaging Europe's regions and local cooperation, are just some examples of topics of strategic interest, which directly target all four corners of the knowledge square and university mission as a whole. A good example is the collaboration with RESAVER, LIBER, SPARC Europe and ERRIN, which are organisations whose direct focus goes beyond education but is still essential for the wider sector to develop and thrive. Depending on capacity, FOREU4ALL could build upon this good practice and build an even bigger outreach in the future to launch collaboration with civil society stakeholders or relevant business actors.

Capacity constraints, however, remain a true challenge. FOREU4ALL has only a small Central Office team but the management of its fast-growing network and structured collaboration requests would require a much more formalised and greater support system.

5. Sister Projects

After the establishment of FOREU4ALL, the Community of Practice and Project Management Team have been actively searching for parallel EU-funded initiatives with complementary focus and objectives. The reasoning behind the cooperation between the so-called "EUI Sister Projects" is to share information and results of data collection, identify synergies in ongoing and future activities, plan collective initiatives, broaden

outreach beyond the originally identified target groups, and avoid duplication of efforts. Following this rationale, FOREU4ALL has established and maintained a very close cooperation particularly with 2 projects: LTA SPREAD EUI and Future4Alliances. Contact has been established in very early stages of both projects and has already produced a number of concrete results.

5.1 Future4Alliances

Regarding **Future4Alliances**, several members of the FOREU4ALL governance have joined Future4Alliances as associated partners via their Alliances and/or home institutions, giving them first-hand information on FOREU4ALL activities and the possibility to actively join discussions and provide feedback. Among others, this included the participation of several FOREU4ALL members in the policy-oriented workshop on "Sustainability of Funding," which took place on 30 September and 1 October 2025 in Vienna, and the opportunity to share feedback on the text of the so-called "Vienna Charter," outlining "Common Principles of European Universities Alliances" while still in its draft form.

Aside from these activities, a direct link has also been established between the project's respective Work Packages and the FOREU4ALL Community of Practice, giving them direct access to the expertise of more than 2.000+ experts in FOREU4ALL's Topical Groups. This collaboration has been particularly fruitful, especially in the topics concerning European Degrees and Joint Programmes and the International Dimension of European Universities Alliances. As a result, members of the European Degree and Joint Programmes TG invited Future4Alliances speakers to the first-ever FOREU4ALL workshop in December 2025, titled "Putting the European Degree Label into Action: Bridging Policy and Practice". To further build on the workshop outcomes, FOREU4ALL colleagues then helped actively shape the programme of and present their experience and main challenges during the Future4Alliances workshop on "Joint Educational Programmes and Activities" in April 2026 in Madrid.

In another vein, the TG on Internationalisation and Global Outreach participated in the Future4Alliances drafting group on the International and hosting dimensions of European Universities Alliances. They are currently closely collaborating with regards to a new round of the "Survey on European Universities Alliances Geopolitical Strategy for Non-EU Collaborations" in order to update and further build upon the survey's 2024 edition. The aim is to complement this survey with a mapping of associated partners and provide targeted and evidence-based policy recommendations.

The TG on Governance and Legal Frameworks is also in active contact with their Future4Alliances counterparts, exchanging on existing forms of Alliances' legal status and other topics of mutual interest.

Last but not least, given the Future4Alliances' policy focus and unapparelled access to the Member States, active collaboration has also been established in the framework of FOREU4ALL WP3: Policy Dialogue. As such, Future4Alliances was invited to directly contribute to FOREU4ALL's PLL focused on the sustainability of funding for Alliances held in April 2026, providing an illuminating case study of Alliance support and challenges related to it on the side of the Austrian Ministry of Education. Thanks to this collaboration, closer contacts have also been established with other national Ministry colleagues, particularly in France, which directly amplified FOREU4ALL's outreach and preparation for the DG HE Meeting in Cyprus in May 2026.

5.2 SPREAD EUI

FOREU4ALL's collaboration with **SPREAD EUI** has started at the very beginning of the project. After an initial informal exchange with members of the Project Management Team, the project Co-Coordinator joined SPREAD EUI's very first meeting with participating National Agencies in May 2025, introducing FOREU4ALL and its objectives and already identifying some concrete opportunities for cross-collaboration. The first concrete outcome of these discussions has been FOREU4ALL's contribution to the SPREAD-EUI conference "Putting it into practice: Spreading innovative results from

European Universities alliances to other higher education institutions", organized in October 2025 in Bonn, Germany.

Collaboration efforts have picked up even more speed in 2026. Taking direct inspiration from the findings of the SPREAD EUI survey, "European Universities Alliances as Role Models: Uncovering the Needs and Expectations of (other) Higher Education Institutions to Benefit from the Initiative", it was decided that a cross-project collaboration between FOREU4ALL, Future4Alliances and SPREAD EUI was needed to pool resources and identify concrete opportunities that would allow for the transferability of information and outputs from the Alliance Community of Practice to the wider higher education sector, further strengthening its role-model potential. This objective would not be possible to achieve without such cross-collaboration, as it allows the FOREU4ALL Community of Practice to reach beyond its main target audiences and gain a direct access to Member States, National Agencies and HEIs not participating in Alliances.

Following these reflections, two in-person meetings between the three EUI "Sister Projects" have been organized to date in Brussels, in March 2026 and September 2026, with the direct participation of colleagues from DG EAC and EACEA to ensure policy alignment and discuss concrete expectations. Next meeting is planned for January 2027. As a result, a number of concrete initiatives has already been launched with further collective action planned for the months and years ahead. Most notably:

- FOREU4ALL has participated in an in-person meeting of National Agencies in Budapest in May 2026, organized as part of the SPREAD EUI project. This allowed for the informal presentation of the then-forthcoming Good Practice Database, collecting feedback and identifying main topics of interest for HEIs that are not part of Alliances. Additional opportunities for resource sharing have also been identified, including the creation of a database of currently available Joint Programmes and a list of contacts of national groups of Alliances for further exchange of information. Both of these resources are currently being developed at the FOREU4ALL level.

- FOREU4ALL, SPREAD EUI, and Future4Alliances have collectively participated at the EAIE conference in Glasgow in September 2026 where they provided a presentation targeting HEIs that are not in Alliances as part of the mini sessions programme held in the booth of the European Commission.
- FOREU4ALL and SPREAD EUI are planning a joint webinar aimed at HEIs not participating in Alliances where the FOREU4ALL Database of Good Practices will be presented, directly highlighting those practices that were identified to be of key interest to the wider HE community and that should be most easily transferable, allowing for a direct uptake. This launch webinar will then be developed into a series of webinars and local events organised by individual National Agencies, coordinated by SPREAD EUI. FOREU4ALL and its TGs will contribute with specific thematic case studies and deep dives into concrete questions and challenges that might be of interest to the respective audiences.
- FOREU4ALL will directly contribute to SPREAD EUI's upcoming Guidelines on Transferability, be it via participation in interviews, focus groups or analysis of the Good Practice Database. Once the Guidelines are finalised, a special online Policy Learning Lab will be organized to further dive into the concept of a "role model", discussing concrete examples of what Alliances can be doing in order to make their results transferable to the wider HE community and encourage broader uptake.
- Plans have been developed to submit a collective session for EAIE conference in Lisbon in 2027 and CEEDUCON 2027.
- All three sister projects will actively contribute to each other's final events and cross-disseminate reports and concrete recommendations to ensure broader outreach beyond original target groups.

5.3 SCOPE-HE

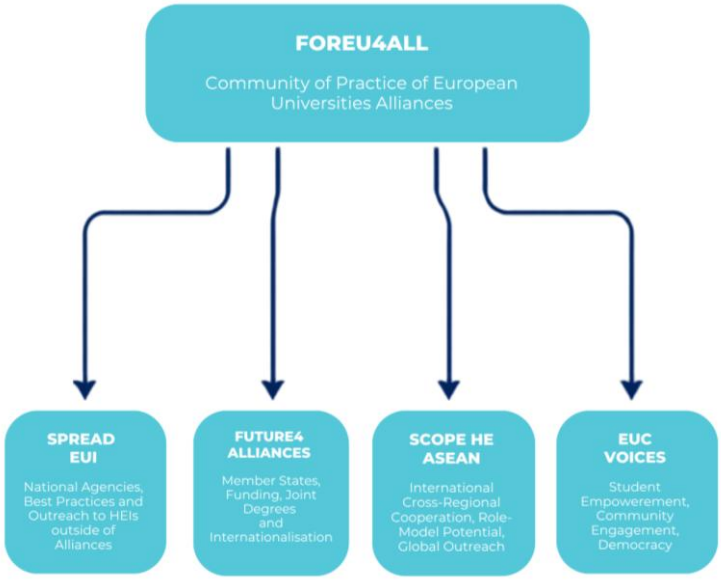
Aside from these two projects, after an initial exploratory call, FOREU4ALL has also established a collaborative channel with the **SCOPE-HE** project supported by DG INTPA. This project, focusing on cross-border educational cooperation in the ASEAN region, has

been largely inspired by the European Universities Alliances Initiative, especially in the fields of quality insurance, joint degrees, and upscaling internationalisation and innovation in educational offerings. To further strengthen this "role-model" potential of the Alliance Community globally, FOREU4ALL Forum Board Vice-Chair, Fernando Pérez-Peña (SEA-EU), kindly agreed to personally join SCOPE-HE's Policy Dialogue Forum in Manila, the Philippines, taking place in October 2026. Participation at this large international gathering allowed Fernando to present the FOREU4ALL project and its activities and actively exchange on topics of common interest, be it degree recognition, quality assurance, or specific processes and challenges related to setting up a university Alliance. However, the cooperation between SCOPE-HE and FOREU4ALL does not end here and will be further strengthened through their contribution to the FOREU4ALL Policy Learning Lab series focused on the global dimension of Alliances and via a continued collaboration and data exchange with the Topical Group on Internationalisation and Global Outreach.

5.4 EUC-Voices

Another relevant "sister project" that FOREU4ALL collaborates with is **EUC-Voices.** The European Universities Community is a grassroots initiative launched by the European Universities Alliances to empower students and give them a say in the future of Europe. EUC Voices project promotes students' active engagement through three main initiatives: the annual European Student Assembly (ESA), bringing together over 250 students from diverse European Universities Alliances to shape policy recommendations, the Ambassadors Forum, where one student per institution addresses pivotal EUA-related challenges, and the EUC Alumni Network, a vibrant community shaping the future of these initiatives. FOREU4ALL has supported EUC-Voices, for example, by disseminating the calls for ESA 2025 and 2026 and providing a platform to share their reports and recommendations. Moreover, the Student-Led Community Topical Group engaged with EUC-Voices through participation in steering committee meetings and a presentation on democratic student participation at the European Student Assembly in Strasbourg in April 2026.

5.5 Recommendations for the Future



Picture 1: Collaboration between FOREU4ALL and EUI "sister projects"

Alongside regular exchanges with the wider HE stakeholder community, collaboration with the "sister projects" (for a comprehensive summary, see Picture 1) currently lies at the forefront of FOREU4ALL external engagement activities, as it was identified as one of the most effective ways for fulfilling FOREU4ALL's ambition to reach out beyond its primary target audience and foster engagement of HEIs that do not participate in the Alliances. There is a great strategic benefit to bringing these three projects to the same table, since their objectives and main activities are mostly aligned but their target audiences are radically different. Only through mutual cooperation is it possible to reach outside of naturally established echo-chambers and engage target groups that would normally not be easily reachable, be it the Member States, the National Agencies or HEIs that do not themselves take part in the Alliances but might be interested in their activities.

Aside from the selected number of collective initiatives already outlined above, the cooperation of the three main projects has also had another positive impact: creation of a collective repository of resources. Thanks to the mutual cross-sharing of reports,

upcoming events, and direct contributions to each other's activities, an important archive gathering survey results, case studies and concrete policy recommendations has been established, making it easily accessible to any interested independent researchers, policymakers, members of interested HEIs and other audiences to access, share and learn from, no matter which website they find it on originally.

Moreover, the three projects established a common virtual space operated under Microsoft Teams to facilitate exactly this type of information-sharing in order to encourage timely project updates, registrations for events or dissemination of data collection opportunities. This is in addition to events and resources already shared on each project's websites. This communications channel has also been shared with colleagues from DG EAC and EACEA to ensure awareness and the possibility to quickly exchange information on important events or policy developments that might require urgent action.

Finally, the bi-annual in-person meetings in Brussels make up for the last piece of the puzzle in the timely cross-coordination of efforts between all three projects, giving a space to truly go in-depth in regard to project updates, identifying concrete synergies and next steps. The fact that each meeting is officially organised by a different project also helps to strengthen the feeling of collective ownership of the initiative and ensures future sustainability.

In the upcoming months, the main focus of interest will be on the question of transferability of results to HEIs not participating in Alliances and organisation of webinars and events aimed at the local level. This has, so far, been done to only a limited extent. However, the concrete initiatives collectively identified at the last in-person meeting in Brussels in September 2026 and mentioned in more detail above should help strengthen these efforts.

Looking into the future, there is a need to discuss the continuation of these cross-collaboration efforts also after the end of the current projects (2027 for Spread EUI,

2028 for Future4Alliances) to ensure that the momentum is not lost and identified target audiences can still benefit from the resources and information gathered.

6. Inclusion of Non-Alliance HEIs and Individual Researchers

One of FOREU4ALL's central objectives is the fostering of the European Higher Education Area, not only for the Alliances but for the higher education sector as a whole. For this reason, FOREU4ALL is actively testing different ways to strengthen the role-model potential of the Alliances in its attempt to break out the "Alliance bubble" and encourage information-sharing, peer-exchange, and uptake also by higher education institutions that are not members of an Alliance.

6.1 Inclusion of Non-Alliance HEIs

As mentioned above, a successful strategy in this respect has proved to be FOREU4ALL's collaboration with its "Sister Projects," especially Future4Alliances and SPREAD EUI, given their direct access to Member States and National Agencies. SPREAD EUI plays an especially key role here, since they foster regular exchanges between represented National Agencies, exchanging information and best practices regarding concrete strategies for fostering productive exchanges and peer-learning between Alliances' member universities and the rest of the sector. Following SPREAD EUI's compilation of key topics of interest for non-Alliance HEIs regarding Alliance activities ("European Universities Alliances as Role Models: Uncovering the Needs and Expectations of (other) Higher Education Institutions to Benefit from the Initiative"), FOREU4ALL has adjusted its Communications and Dissemination strategy in order to better target the concrete needs and interests of non-Alliance HEIs. According to the SPREAD EUI survey, the majority of questioned non-Alliance HEIs believe that the most effective way of benefitting from the innovative results of the European Universities Initiative is by "implementing good practices shared by alliances" (page 28). To answer to this need, FOREU4ALL has launched its Database of Good Practices in July 2026, which now includes over 60 best practices, with new ones submitted on a regular basis. Moreover,

most of these best practices touch directly on the topics identified as most interesting or beneficial to non-Alliance HEIs, be it mobility, the development of joint educational offers and micro-credentials, digitalisation, skills development, and pedagogical innovation (page 26).

However, the Database of Good Practices does not remain an idle resource. Not only will it be regularly updated, a series of topical webinars is also planned to make the Database more tangible and showcase its potential for awareness-raising and concrete uptake. As mentioned in the previous section, these webinars will once again be organised in collaboration with SPREAD EUI and the participating National Agencies to ensure that they truly reach the desired target audience and are of true benefit to the non-Alliance HEIs. The impact of such exchanges could already be felt during the SPREAD EUI conference in Bonn in October 2025, where Alliances and non-Alliance HEIs were invited to the same table. This allowed for a genuine exchange on concrete challenges and topics of interest and for a lively peer-learning environment. Once these webinars are completed, additional formats will be discussed, aligned with the findings of the SPREAD EUI's upcoming Guidelines on transferability of Alliances' outputs and the forthcoming workshop on Alliances' role-model potential organised by EACEA in 2027.

Aside from "Sister Project" collaboration, FOREU4ALL keeps non-Alliance HEIs and researchers in mind also in its other activities. All thematic webinars organised by our 20 TGs, be it on Mobility, Quality Assurance, Impact or the Internationalisation of educational offering, just like our Policy Learning Labs, which have this year covered Funding and the Global Dimension of Alliances, are accessible to everyone upon registration. The recordings are also available on our YouTube channel, allowing interested participants and researchers to follow them in their own time or to return to specific points of interest in the discussion. Following each online event, registered participants receive a link to the respective recording, summary of main takeaways and next steps, and any showcased presentations or other resources. Participation at these online webinars also gives attendants the opportunity to ask questions in real time

during dedicated Q&As, if available. The same is true for the plenary sessions organised during FOREU4ALL in-person workshops, which can be followed online as well. Information about all FOREU4ALL events is freely accessible on the project website and social media channels and is usually shared with our "Sister Projects" and higher education stakeholders via our internal mailing and communications lists, and on our shared Teams space, to ensure broad outreach.

External stakeholders from non-Alliance institutions are far from being treated as passive viewers or listeners. The work of the FOREU4ALL TGs is especially crucial here, since their workshops and webinars usually provide the largest space for participation and co-creation. Among others, the 2nd FOREU4ALL Workshop in Granada focused on "Aligning Project Management and Impact" (15-17 April, 2026) gave spotlight to external stakeholders and experts already in its Keynote Panel. Alongside higher education stakeholders, like Jan Palmowski from The Guild, and Member State representatives, like Caroline Censier-Calmus from the French Ministry, the stage was taken also by Antonin Charret, a researcher from the University of Oxford who focuses on the Alliances in his scholarly work. Additional external experts also contributed to the co-creation of the workshop content and participated in its exercises, including members of SIRIS Academic. In total, the workshop had 371 registrations, out of which 159 were on-site and 212 online. Online participation at plenary sessions was also available to members of non-Alliance HEIs.

In a similar vein, the public webinar organised by the Impact Topical Group on "EUAs Good Impact Assessment Practices" (18 May, 2026) resulted in more than 180 registrations, including 16 external stakeholders. One of the aims of this webinar was to open the discussion on FOREU4ALL's impact assessment practices to participants outside of the Alliance community, given the universal importance of the topic. The webinar was recorded and made available on YouTube. Together with a compilation of Impact Best Practices published on the FOREU4ALL website, access to this material by the wider sector was extended even further. The "Institutional Reviews and Quality

Assurance of European University Alliances" webinar (10 March 2026) was also inherently outward-looking, eventually attracting 18 external organisations interested in the topic of quality assurance. Last but not least, the 1st FOREU4ALL workshop, titled "Putting the European Degree Label into Action: Bridging Policy and Practice" (3-5 December 2025), brought together 104 onsite participants, representing 59 Alliances and 8 external speakers, including quality assurance agencies, policymakers, and other non-alliance members following the discussions online.

This external outreach goes beyond EU borders to interested non-Alliance universities also in enlargement and accession countries. A fitting example here is the work of the Cooperation with Ukraine TG who have been in direct engagement and inclusion of **Ukrainian universities** and authorities in regular meetings, case study reviews, and a joint advocacy and policy workshop in Prague and Kyiv to support Ukraine's HE recovery, resilience, and EU integration. Their Prague workshop (16-17 October, 2025) was organised with the help of the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Czech National Agency for International Education and Research, helping to bring to the same table Alliances, Ukrainian universities, and policymakers. In a similar vein, the ALLIES TG focused on life-long learning and micro-credentials has organised multiple expert exchanges, among others an expert presentation on European developments in certification, recognition, micro-credentials, quality assurance, ECTS, and qualification frameworks with Prof. Robert Wagenaar (International Tuning Academy / University of Groningen). They also gave platform to the **European Universities Continuing Education Network** (EUCEN) to present research findings from the Erasmus+ SAMUELE Project, focused on national university lifelong learning policies across 18 countries and 100+ universities. Finally, the Diversity and Inclusion Topical Group has also been actively collaborating with EU-funded research projects focused on inclusion and gender equality, including IDEM, GenderSAFE and GENDERACTIONplus. This allowed for active exchanges of best practices and produced guidelines and toolkits, that were then distributed within the wider FOREU4ALL Community. Project representatives also joined the Topical Group's knowledge-sharing sessions during 2025-2026, providing

presentations on topics spanning inclusion, accessibility, student engagement and gender equality implementation.

Last but not least, FOREU4ALL has recently started receiving **Letters of Intent** from non-Alliance higher education institutions, asking about the possibility of officially joining FOREU4ALL and its activities. In its current composition, FOREU4ALL does not have the capacity to directly include institutions outside of Alliances in its governance structurers or as active participants within TGs. However, an active contact has been established with each entity of this sort, recounting upcoming events and other possibilities of external engagement, including via activities organised by the "Sister Projects". This movement shows that the word about FOREU4ALL's existence is slowly spreading also outside of the Alliance "bubble", allowing it to broaden its potential impact to the higher education sector as a whole.

6.2 Collaboration with Scholars

In case of mutual interest, TGs also directly reach out to relevant researchers or other external experts to expand their own methodological frameworks. A fitting example here would be a Keynote presentation by Denis Naughten (Former Irish Minister for Communications & Climate Action) on the "Three C's" framework (Context, Citizen Impact, Clarity) aimed to bridge the gap between research and academic output and policy decision-making, organised by the TG on Regional Innovation Ecosystems.

FOREU4ALL is also in an active and regular contact with the **Center for Higher Education Policy Studies** (CHEPS), a research institute at the University of Twente specialised in international higher education policy. Researchers from this institute and other research networks frequently collaborate with FOREU4ALL's governing bodies and TG experts. To mention just a few examples, several of our TGs, Forum Board and wider community members presented at the "European Universities Initiative 5 Years On: A Research and Practice Symposium" in Lugano (2-3 June 2025) and the "European Universities Initiative: 2nd Research and Practice Symposium" in Vienna (2-3 July, 2026), while the Micro-credentials subgroup of the FOREU4ALL ALLIES TG provided content and

facilitated a workshop during the Amsterdam Masterclass on Micro-credentials (24-26 February, 2026). FOREU4ALL has also actively contributed to discussions about the Symposiums' focus and the most useful formats for its outputs. Recently, the research group submitted a project proposal for a COST-funded action that would allow them to create a more formalised communication channel and research network bringing together Alliances and external researchers. Several FOREU4ALL bodies have been actively consulted during the proposal drafting process and would be in favour of deepening the current collaboration even further in case the project proposal was successfully funded.

In the past months, there have also been several **requests for data collection** (e.g. surveys, interviews, thesis research) and **invitations to present at conferences**, allowing to build a bridge between the Alliance community and researchers analysing its development. Requests from scholars to interview, survey or collect data from Alliances are always supported and disseminated in the community, as data collection on the impact of the EUI is in our common interest. To name just two examples, the Cooperation with Ukraine TG and Internationalisation and Global Outreach participated in CEEDUCON 2025 in Prague (19-20 November, 2025), using the conference as a platform for exchange with external higher education stakeholders and researchers on Alliance internationalisation, European Degree implementation, and Governance and Partnership development. Moreover, members of the Quality Assurance Topical Group were invited to facilitate a workshop "Co-Piloting Quality: Building Resilient QA Practices Across Borders" during the European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF) in Budapest (14 November, 2025), bringing together a mixed audience of Alliance representatives, quality assurance agencies, higher education institutions, university networks, independent researchers and other stakeholders from the European higher education sector.

Finally, some members of the project management team have also been invited to join PhD defence committees of students focused on the Alliances, which has taken this lifeline of collaboration full circle.

6.3 Recommendations for the Future

As written above in our reflection on the FOREU4ALL engagement in EAIE sessions, attracting the interest and participation of non-Alliance HEIs often remains a challenge. Despite the organisation of dedicated sessions or activities, there is no guarantee that the target audience actually joins these events, making the danger of creating silos or eco-chambers ever so present. This clearly shows that no stakeholder or project is capable of attracting this target group on its own. Concerted efforts, bringing together the Alliances, HE stakeholders, National Agencies, and national, regional and European policymakers are needed to create regular and accessible fora that would create genuine spaces for encounter and peer exchange and encourage possible uptake. European Universities Alliances are increasingly acting as role-models for the wider education sector, encouraging the implementation of best practices and leaving a tangible impact of the sector as a whole. FOREU4ALL is ready to continue showcasing Alliances' innovative practices and encourage transferability. However, this ambition does not come without its challenges.

In its current form, the focus of FOREU4ALL is, first and foremost, the development and maintenance of the Community of Practice of Alliances, which is also its target audience. Active collaboration with higher education stakeholders and policymakers follows suit, collectively fostering a policy environment that would help complete and strengthen the European Higher Education Area. Outreach to target audiences outside of these three groups remains constrained not only because of a lack of capacity but also access, since non-Alliance HEIs do not find our content and activities organically. Looking back at the SPREAD EUI survey results (page 22), we start to understand why. Based on the responses of the non-Alliance HEIs, the primary source of information on the European Universities Alliances actually does not come from the Alliances themselves (only 17%),

but from National Agencies (76%), European Commission (43%), Colleagues (30%), and EACEA (24%). This is why we believe that reaching out to non-Alliance HEIs is only possible through a collective effort of all interested and involved stakeholders and the role of the National Agencies in facilitating information exchange is absolutely key here.

Bearing this in mind, in the upcoming months, we will continue strengthening the productive collaboration with our "Sister Projects", DG EAC and EACEA to collectively identify new avenues for broader outreach. In the meantime, all FOREU4ALL reports and most events will, in some form, remain openly accessible to the broader public, and non-Alliance HEIs in particular. When it comes to individual researchers and research teams, our TG experts and Governance team will always remain open for collaboration, be it through guest presentations at TG meetings, dissemination of data collection instruments, interviews, conferences, or, in certain cases, even participation in PhD and MA defence committees.

7. Media Appearances

Media appearances are an opportunity to contribute to the public discourse around Alliances and reach audiences beyond our immediate consortium and formal stakeholder network. It supports the visibility of the work of FOREU4ALL and European Universities Alliances, and it is an important opportunity to set the agenda around the European Universities Alliances, nurture further discussions, broaden our relationships, and encourage uptake and wider participation.

FOREU4ALL has been featured in several media outlets. Table 2 below presents a selection of articles where FOREU4ALL is explicitly mentioned, e.g. through the coverage of a FOREU4ALL webinar or activity, or an interview with FOREU4ALL representatives.

Table 2: List of FOREU4ALL media appearances

Date	Media	FOREU4ALL connection / message

3 October 2024	NewsTank Academic (link)	FOREU4ALL to invest €2.3M in the community of practice; recruiting support secretariat for alliances. Interview with FOREU4ALL Coordinator.
20 November 2024	University World News (link)	Interview about the importance of interoperability for European University Alliances and the European higher education sector, together with FOREU4ALL EAB member Thomas Jorgensen
28 January 2025	NewsTank Academic (link)	FOREU4ALL Forum Board (2025-2026): Beatrix Busse (EUniWell) elected chair with 14 other members.
10 March 2025	NewsTank Academic (link)	Dedicated interview explicitly discussing FOREU4ALL's European Degree work. "FOREU4ALL will continue the development process"
14 March 2025	NewsTank Academic (link)	Olga Wessels is identified as Co-Coordinator of FOREU4ALL and discusses the European Universities Alliances. “A clear signal from the European Commission that alliances are here to stay”.
3 July 2025	Education Technology Insides (link)	Outline of the value of working together (example is FOREU4ALL) and importance of interoperability for Europe's higher education.
21 November 2025	NewsTank Academic (link)	Interview with Chair and Co-Coordinator, presenting FOREU4ALL's messages concerning the future of European University Alliances. Universities Alliances ask for long-term, flexible support and funding (reflection on FOREU4ALL Discussion Paper).
5 February 2026	Research Professional (link)	Interview about the need of structural support and a research dimension for Alliances (interview Coordinator and Chair FOREU4ALL).
17 February 2026	NewsTank Academic (link)	FOREEU4ALL reappoints Chair and Vice-Xhair for second term in new Forum Board mandate.
19 February 2026	University World News (link)	Interview with Co-Coordinator and Chair of FOREU4ALL about the need for predictable funding for Alliances and universities in general, and the importance of a research dimension for the initiative.
11 March 2026	NewsTank Academic (link)	European universities alliances ask how they might be recognised in the future

13 May 2026	Science Business (link)	Interview about the importance of Member State support of the role Alliances play for European competitiveness, and a research and innovation dimension of the Alliances.
4 June 2026	NewsTank Academic (link)	Alliances and UK universities prepare for Erasmus+ association to open new opportunities as full members. Co-Coordinator of FOREU4ALL is interviewed to discuss UK universities engagement in European Universities Alliances.
23 July 2026	NewsTank Academic (link)	Ten European Universities Alliances raise concerns about the access cut to EUSurvey services.

7.1 Evaluation of Media Coverage

As written above, media coverage can be important for FOREU4ALL to extend the reach beyond its own communication channels. But media coverage can also be a double-edged instrument of external engagement, as FOREU4ALL has less control over the frame and interpretation of the produced messages.

Much of the media coverage above helped raise FOREU4ALL's visibility, such as NewsTank Academic articles about the start, election results and activities of FOREU4ALL. The Discussion Paper would have never had the visibility and recognition if it was only shared via FOREU4ALL's primary channels (NewsTank Academic 21 November 2025). The University World News (19 February 2026) and Science Business (13 May 2026) articles also helped raise awareness about a much-needed multi-mission approach and Member State support for the future of the European Universities Alliances.

Other articles show the danger connected to the lack of oversight over the content of the final drafts. The article titled "Broken promises' on EUI alliances prompt" (ResearchProfessional, 5 February 2026) calls for a clear pathway for European Universities Alliances but is negative about the initiatives' support among policymakers. Although FOREU4ALL contributed with a constructive quote, the article itself is not

helpful in developing that much needed pathway and a constructive dialogue between all concerned parties. This is, of course, not the case of only FOREU4ALL but all engagement with journalistic outlets, but it is important to reflect on it here.

Another risk is the tricky balance of FOREU4ALL representing European Universities Alliances, but not per se controlling every joint Alliance initiative. FOREU4ALL, for example, was not collectively involved in the concerns related to the end of access to EU Survey services (NewsTank Academic, 23 July 2026). However, FOREU4ALL is explicitly mentioned in the article, which resulted in the FOREU4ALL Forum Board Chair being directly approached with follow-up questions by the European Commission, despite the lack of knowledge about this initiative on the Governance level. For this reason, updated guidelines for publications and public statements are currently being drafted to ensure a coordinated approach. The objective is not to control public engagement by individual Alliances, TG experts or joint initiatives but rather to make sure that in cases where FOREU4ALL is explicitly mentioned, relevant governance levels are involved in the content drafting and/or are at least aware that such initiatives exist and what their objectives are, ensuring that messaging is aligned across all project levels and Governance bodies.

7.2 Recommendations for the Future

Coverage in specialised European education and research outlets, such as NewsTank Academic, Research Professional, University World News, and Science|Business, provide evidence of access to relevant audiences and help to further broaden FOREU4ALL's outreach also beyond the "Alliance bubble". It helps disseminating the activities and messaging of FOREU4ALL and shows FOREU4ALL as a relevant and knowledgeable partner in policymaking.

Media coverage also helps extend the reach of FOREU4ALL beyond its own communication channels, raise visibility and awareness and set the agenda regarding topics of key interest for the Alliances. It can also enhance the outreach of FOREU4ALL and help the engagement in subsequent FOREU4ALL events and initiatives. Moreover,

it can support the uptake, reference and recognition of FOREU4ALL's work, ensuring broader influence and strengthening of the role-model potential of Alliances. This way, if used strategically, media visibility can support external engagement and substantially enhance FOREU4ALL's overall influence.

However, media coverage should be well coordinated to ensure FOREU4ALL is not caught by surprise, for example, when groups of individual Alliances are approached by journalists. This media coverage could be attributed to FOREU4ALL and there is a potential reputation/association risk. A simple request to the FOREU4ALL Community to inform the Forum Board or other Governance levels about any upcoming media coverage could help mitigate such risks.

Furthermore, Alliance colleagues should be aware of the degree of loss of narrative control when talking to journalists. For example, media outlet narratives often favour topics of conflict, risk and negative development over gradual achievements and longer-term opportunities. Complex organisational activities may be simplified or selectively framed. Forum Board Members, in particular, need to be briefed about the importance of fostering a positive frame around the European Universities Initiative and the need for continuing a constructive dialogue without downplaying associated challenges.

Finally, media visibility is an enabling condition for external engagement, but not the evidence of engagement or influence in itself. Its value is greatest when there is a link to subsequent stakeholder interaction, participation, dissemination, collaboration or update. Such links should be kept in mind when talking to journalists, especially when it comes to Forum Board Members, and will be further discussed during upcoming meetings of the respective FOREU4ALL Governance levels.

8. Governance Assessment

Given the nature and set-up of the FOREU4ALL project, external engagement and internal governance are inherently interlinked because an effective external engagement strategy requires a robust, transparent and representative internal governance framework to function. If policymakers (e.g. European Commission, European Parliament, Permanent Representations, National Agencies) or higher education sector stakeholders (e.g. EUA, ESU, EURASHE, ENQA, ESN) cannot clearly identify a direct point of contact or an official representative with a legitimate mandate to speak on behalf of the FOREU4ALL Community of Practice, the collective voice of the Community is diminished and important opportunities for engagement and cross-collaboration get lost.

8.1 Terms of Reference

The FOREU4ALL Consortium Agreement and Terms of Reference (D1.1 "Terms of Reference for the Project Meeting", D1.2 "Terms of Reference for the General Forum and Forum Board", and D1.3 "Terms of Reference for the External Advisory Board") established a multi-layered structure (General Forum, Forum Board, Project Management Team, Central Office, Topical Groups) to allow for the combination of a bottom-up representation and broad co-creation across all participating Alliances with an effective community management system, structured decision-making processes, and operational project oversight.

The Project Management Team and Central Office, with a significant presence in Brussels where key policymakers (DG EAC, EACEA, Member State Permanent Representations, and European Parliament Committees) and HE external stakeholders are located, act as the Community's operational hub. They connect the individual governance levels and TG experts with relevant stakeholders and engagement opportunities, be it presentations at conferences, for data collection (surveys, interviews, focus groups), or representation at public events and missions (e.g. Rector's

Conference in Brussels in June 2026; DG HE meeting in Cyprus in May 2026; or the accompanying of EVP Mînzatu during her US mission by Beatrix Busse, Chair of FOREU4ALL Forum Board).

8.2 Mechanics of External Engagement and Representation

External representation operates through a dual-track mechanism. The first one comprises 15 Members of the Forum Board who act as elected political leads. The Forum Board operates with a 1-year mandate, with a maximum limit of two consecutive years in office. All 65 Alliances are eligible to put forward a Forum Board candidate in the hope that the majority of Alliances will be represented over the duration of the project, and thus share representative and decision-making powers and workload. The only exception are Alliances making up the Project Management Team, whose representatives are already permanent members of the Forum Board and therefore do not need to be elected again.

The Forum Board elections are held each year during the first session of the General Forum where all 65 Alliances cast their vote. As a directly elected body, the Forum Board holds legitimacy to represent FOREU4ALL externally and to vote on any public statements. It is presided over by an elected Chair and two Vice-Chairs with the same 1-year mandate. The Chair and Vice-Chairs play a key strategic role, since they represent FOREU4ALL externally and provide strategic orientations.

The Chair and Vice-Chairs work in close collaboration with the FOREU4ALL Co-Coordinators as part of a WP1 Board and with the WP1 project officer to ensure that their strategic leadership is aligned with the objectives and activities of the Erasmus+ project. The Co-Coordinators represent FOREU4ALL externally and ensure coherence between project activities and governance of the Community of Practice in cooperation with the elected Chair and Vice-Chairs. The elected Chair officially convenes meetings of the Forum Board and General Forum and the External Advisory Board, setting up the agenda and policy priorities and defining necessary next steps, alongside the WP1 Board and the Project Management Team. The two Vice-Chairs support the Chair in fulfilling

the abovementioned responsibilities and step in when the Chair is unavailable. Together, the Chair, Vice-Chairs and Co-Coordinators may delegate tasks among themselves or other members of the Forum Board as necessary in order to ensure the efficient operation of FOREU4ALL.

Unlike traditional networks operating under a single-spokesperson model, FOREU4ALL's strength lies in representing a genuine diversity of institutional profiles, Alliance generations, and geographic backgrounds, showcasing the varied nature of the Alliance Community. Annual Forum Board elections and a strict 2-year office limit hope to avoid over-reliance on a few recurring figures and open up representative roles to all Alliances, effectively balancing ease of external access with broad community representation.

Aside from the elected representatives, the Central Office team and TG experts, especially their Chairs, also play an important representative role, participating at conferences and thematic events or launching strategic collaborations with key external partners and higher education stakeholders. Given the current policy climate and the strategic importance of dialogue with Member State representatives and other local and regional authorities, active engagement of FOREU4ALL representatives located outside of Brussels and rooted in their respective local contexts is becoming ever more key, be it through a direct engagement with national Ministries, regional university networks, civil society and business partners or National Agencies.

8.3 Sectoral Adaption: Integrating SoE Alliances

At its outset, FOREU4ALL pledged to bring all European Universities Alliances into a single Community of Practice. In response to the evolution of the sector and the creation of a new Alliance-like format, the so-called SoE Alliances, the project immediately opened its daily operational exchanges, participation in the General Forum, and TG activities also to this newly designated category. However, despite the opportunity to participate in all FOREU4ALL activities, voting rights in the General Forum, and eligibility for Forum Board membership, are reserved only to fully funded Alliances.

By welcoming the SoE Alliances from their onset, FOREU4ALL has successfully prevented structural fragmentation across the Alliance Community, reinforcing its role as the unifying and inclusive platform for *all* European Universities Alliances, despite this engagement not being originally envisioned at the project proposal stage. As the Alliance Community further evolves, with some Alliances losing their current status or certain SoE Alliances successfully gaining project funding, FOREU4ALL remains committed to involving the entire Alliance Community, facilitating pro-active outreach to the respective entities and processing amendments to the Grant and Consortium Agreements as necessary.

8.4 Operational Realities & Challenges in External Engagement

Naturally, as the FOREU4ALL project scales up in response to developments in the wider sector, the evolving needs of the Community of Practice and its expansion, new challenges and needs for future re-adjustments arise. This goes hand in hand with the Community's expanded outreach to policymakers, non-Alliance HEIs and broader sector stakeholders outreach compared to its initial phase. A brief reflection on some of these can be found below, including recommendations for future steps. These reflections are the result of an in-person Project Management Team meeting that took place in Brussels on 2 September 2026. Its aim was to take stock of the first two years of the project, identify any operational and implementation hurdles, and create an action plan for the next two years of the project and beyond.

Consensus vs. Diversity of Voices

As explained above, one of the core objectives of FOREU4ALL is to represent the full diversity of profiles of European Universities Alliances rather than operating through a single, centralized spokesperson model. For this to function, external engagement must maintain low entry thresholds for consultation while ensuring that input provided to external bodies accurately reflects the community's broad spectrum. As the visibility and recognition of FOREU4ALL in the wider sector grows hand-in-hand with the multiplication of its produced output, there is a necessity for clear guidelines and

approval procedure for all publications, public statements and media appearances. A balance needs to be found between empowering colleagues and TGs and amplifying the voices of individual Alliances versus presenting certain individual or group outputs as an official position of FOREU4ALL. The danger is that such claims might, by extension, create the false view that these outputs have been endorsed by all Alliances, which is not always the case and it is very important to differentiate, since the issuing of external public stances without explicit community validation risks misrepresenting the collective network and damage external credibility.

Initial publication guidelines and endorsement procedures were already stipulated at the beginning of the project and laid out in its Terms of Reference mentioned above. However, as the number of produced outputs and the recognition of FOREU4ALL's representative role grows, external representation and publication guidelines need to be appropriately updated to establish explicit validation procedures, ensuring that all published inputs include appropriate disclaimers, distinguishing publications endorsed by the whole Community of Alliances from Topical Group outputs or initiatives of individual Alliance representatives and their partners.

Capacity Constraints and Representative Infrastructure

As the recognition of FOREU4ALL's role in and contribution to the wider higher education sector increases, so does the volume of external demands. Governance representatives and TG Chairs receive almost daily requests to represent FOREU4ALL at external events, panels, and policy workshops or to provide input to surveys and other forms of data collection, policy consultations, or media inquiries. While TG representatives provide deep thematic expertise and present a genuine goldmine of on-the-ground knowledge of Alliances' functioning and transnational academic cooperation, managing and coordinating this constant influx of external speaking and other engagements creates an administrative and capacity burden that risks pulling TG Chairs and other Community representatives away from their established working plans and other core commitments. It is also important to mention that given the project's

limited resources, all 2000+ TG experts and the majority of the governance representatives contribute to FOREU4ALL on voluntary basis on top of their day-to-day commitments, which makes the questions of overload and necessity to balance external engagements with internal commitments even more crucial for ensuring the Community's future sustainability and continued engagement.

In a similar vein, the Forum Board, due to its elected political mandate, acts as the primary body designed to represent FOREU4ALL in high-level policy dialogue and other external arenas. The Central Office and project coordinating team is actively streamlining internal workflows to systematically route incoming external invitations to relevant Forum Board members, based on thematic expertise, interests or knowledge of local context, distributing the representation load while maintaining strong political legitimacy. However, since most Forum Board members contribute to the project on a voluntary basis, their representative capacities are limited. On the other hand, the three FOREU4ALL Officers consisting the Central Office hold a deep knowledge of the project and the whole Community of Practice, since they are the ones supporting and administering it on a daily basis and are themselves permanently present at all Forum Board discussions. Given their in-depth expertise in this area, they have a potential to extend their external engagement roles to make up for at least some of this limited capacity. The same goes for the project's full partners. Although they are actively engaged in all project activities, their external representation potential could be even more amplified, especially when it comes to participation at conferences or fostering collaborations with national and regional-level stakeholders.

8.5 Recommendations for the Future

To ensure that FOREU4ALL continues to effectively represent the needs of the Community of Practice of European Universities Alliances and act as a multiplier across the European higher education sector as a whole, the Project Management Team has decided to perform the following activities:

- **Round 2 Needs Analysis Survey:** Launching a dedicated survey among Alliance Coordinators and TG Chairs, which will directly build on a survey conducted during the project proposal drafting, to evaluate progress against baseline priorities, explicitly evaluating the Community's satisfaction with FOREU4ALL's external representation, stakeholder engagement (e.g. with the External Advisory Board – EUA, ESU, EURASHE, ENQA, ESN – and the wider higher education sector), and outreach to non-Alliance higher education institutions.
- **Stock-Taking Exercise (General Forum Extraordinary Session):** Hosting an interactive 90-120-minute stock-taking session at an extraordinary General Forum meeting, asking Alliance Coordinators and Topical Group experts to review the Needs Analysis survey results and run parallel breakout reflection discussions dedicated to the activities of all Work Packages. Consolidated findings and proposed measures rooted in the results of the needs analysis survey and the stock-taking reflection exercise will feed directly into the project's Mid-Term Periodic Report due in December 2026, demonstrating an adaptive community mechanism that actively optimizes its external engagement strategy according to changing Community needs and the fluctuating policy environment.
- **Finalizing Publication and Public Statement Protocols:** Formally integrating a clear validation protocol into the updated Governance Framework to ensure that public positions and publication outputs published under the FOREU4ALL banner carry verified community consensus and/or transparent disclaimers.
- **Optimizing the Forum Board Mandate:** Ensuring a continued inclusive nature of the Forum Board, encouraging all Alliance generations to put forward their candidacy and ensure that the diversity of the Alliance Community continues to be reflected also in its governance structures and external representation.
- **Role of Full partners:** Empowering full project partners to represent the Community of Practice even more actively, especially on the national and regional levels.

- **Central Office Role:** Discussing the possibility of modifying the project's Terms of Reference to enable the Central Office Project Officers to hold a stronger external engagement role.
- **Structured Onboarding & Representation Workflows:** Drafting guidelines for onboarding and integrating new European Universities Alliances and Seals of Excellence into the Community of Practice, including the possibility to participate in the governing structures and external representation roles related to it.
- **Long-Term Topical Group and Forum Board Amplification:** Collective brainstorming exercise by the Project Management Team regarding an appropriate future incentivisation and compensation of Topical Group Chairs and Forum Board Members to ensure continued engagement and project commitment, while balancing increased workload. The results of this brainstorming exercise will be included in a future project proposal in case a decision to continue its activities will be taken and pending the publication of an appropriate future funding call.

9. Conclusion and Going Forward

The evaluation of FOREU4ALL's external engagement over its initial phase demonstrates that the project has successfully established itself as a recognized, credible, and strategic **bridge and connector** within the European Higher Education Area. By robustly structuring the process and governance of how the project interacts with external entities, FOREU4ALL has effectively mapped and meaningfully engaged a wide spectrum of stakeholders, ranging from key European higher education networks and EU "Sister Projects" to non-Alliance HEIs and policymakers. However, as the project scales up and the volume of external requests expands, capitalizing on the opportunities identified for future collaboration requires transitioning from initial setup to a more structured, sustainable, and coordinated operational framework to foster a durable ecosystem of engagement through continuous webinars, PLLs, discussion fora, and interactive

workshops designed to translate Alliance learnings into actionable knowledge for non-Alliance HEIs and other stakeholders.

However, to sustain, broaden, and optimize these bridge-building processes, specific recommendations derived from the governance and stakeholder assessments must be systematically taken up by FOREU4ALL's Governing bodies and operational Work Packages:

1. Enhancing Strategic Input and Guidance from the External Advisory Board (EAB)

While the EAB has proven invaluable for validating results and providing strategic perspective, its expert potential can be even more deeply integrated. The Project Management Team, alongside the FOREU4ALL Chair and Vice-Chairs, will coordinate steps to define concrete advisory needs ahead of scheduled meetings and implement structured "homework" for Board members to maximize actionable output. Simultaneously, WP2 will develop concise thematic summaries (1-page overviews) based on annual TG activity reports, allowing EAB members to easily identify cross-synergies and overarching trends. TG Chairs will also receive regular reminders regarding the availability and mandate of the EAB expert pool. Regarding composition, while the current five-member structure remains operational, future governance reflections within the Project Management Team will consider expanding the EAB towards individual institutional practitioners (e.g. Vice-Rectors or International Directors) to inject an on-the-ground operational perspective into these high-level discussions.

2. Streamlining Media, Publication, and Public Statement Protocols

To protect the collective credibility of the Community of Practice and manage narrative risks inherent to media coverage, updated publication guidelines and endorsement procedures are being integrated into the Governance Framework. A formal validation protocol will establish clear distinctions between positions officially endorsed by all

Alliances, thematic outputs from TGs, and independent partner initiatives. Explicit disclaimers will accompany published materials where full community consensus has not been sought or reached. Furthermore, the Community will establish an internal notification workflow requiring Alliances and sub-groups to inform the Forum Board or other appropriate governance levels of prospective media appearances, ensuring that Governance levels are prepared and alignment is maintained.

3. Balancing Representation Capacities and Optimizing Governance Mandates

Because FOREU4ALL relies heavily on the voluntary contributions of over 2000+ community experts and elected representatives, managing the heavy influx of external invitations poses a significant risk of burnout, particularly for TG Chairs and other members contributing to the initiative on a voluntary basis. To build a more sustainable representation model, several structural adjustments will be implemented:

- **Forum Board Mobilization:** As the directly elected political lead of FOREU4ALL, the Forum Board is the logical body to absorb a larger share of high-level external representation. Workflows will systematically route incoming event invitations to Forum Board members based on thematic and geographical alignment.
- **Central Office and Full Partner Empowerment:** Proposals will be submitted to modify the project's Terms of Reference, enabling Central Office Project Officers, who maintain daily project oversight and deep contextual knowledge, to assume formal external representation roles. Similarly, full consortium partners will be empowered to lead representation efforts, particularly at national and regional levels.
- **Incentivization and Long-Term Sustainability:** The Project Management Team will conduct a joint brainstorming exercise to explore appropriate incentivization and compensation models for TG Chairs and Forum Board Members. These measures aim to protect volunteers from capacity overload while securing continued engagement, feeding directly into planning for future funding calls and possible project follow-up phases.

4. Broadening Outreach and Fostering Transferability with Sister Projects

Outreach to non-Alliance HEIs remains a structural challenge, as these institutions rarely access Alliance content directly, relying instead on National Agencies and European Commission resources. FOREU4ALL will continue to deepen its tripartite collaboration with "Sister Projects" like SPREAD EUI and Future4Alliances, leveraging their direct access to Member States and National Agencies. Joint initiatives will centre on making the newly launched Database of Good Practices actionable through targeted webinar series, co-developed guidelines on transferability, smaller interactive workshops, and combined representations at major European conferences (e.g. EAIE).

5. Executing Adaptive Governance and Stock-Taking Exercises

To ensure that FOREU4ALL's external strategy remains responsive to community needs, the Project Management Team will execute a two-step feedback process ahead of the Mid-Term Periodic Report due in December 2026:

- **Round 2 Needs Analysis Survey:** Distributed to Alliance Coordinators and TG Chairs to measure satisfaction with external representation, EAB engagement, and wider sector outreach, among others.
- **Extraordinary General Forum Stock-Taking Session:** A dedicated interactive session where Alliance Coordinators and TG experts review survey results, participate in breakout evaluations across all Work Packages, and this help refine the project's operational trajectory.

By implementing these measures, FOREU4ALL will reinforce its governance framework, safeguard its volunteer community, and solidify its position as an inclusive, effective, and transformative role model across the broader European higher education landscape. However, given that the project still operates under its current operational and funding framework, many of these challenges will continue re-surfacing. More concrete discussions will need to be held in the upcoming months regarding the

sustainability of the current structures for the future years and what modifications might be necessary for its possible next funding round.

10. Annexes

Annex 1: EAB Meeting Notes

Annex 2: Guidelines for External Collaboration Requests

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