FOREU4ALL
EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCES

D3.1

Overview of Policy Engagement and Representation

FOREU4ALL
EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCES

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Executive Summary

In a fast-changing European policy landscape, FOREU4ALL Work Package 3 – Policy Dialogue (WP3) provides a structured space for continuous exchange, evidence gathering, and strategic updates, acting as a connector between Alliances' everyday realities and the policy environment. Bringing together all 65 European Universities Alliances and 8 Seals of Excellence, FOREU4ALL plays a key role in amplifying the voices of the Alliances and translating their expertise and on-the-ground challenges into a direct, evidence-based policy dialogue with European and national decision-makers and the higher education sector as a whole. Please note that "national" here also includes regional and "subnational" levels in case of federal states.

Deliverable D3.1 captures the substance, reach, and concrete impact of selected policy-related engagements, bringing together Alliance practitioners, European Commission officials, Executive Agencies, Members of the European Parliament, Member State representatives, and higher education stakeholders. Operating as an evidence-based Community of Practice rather than a lobby group or a stakeholder organisation, FOREU4ALL bridges grassroots operational experiences across all four corners of the knowledge square with systemic European and national policy formulation, advocating for long-term sustainability and strategic evolution of the European Universities Initiative.

Primary Focus

FOREU4ALL acts as an **enabler and incubator**, nurturing the Community of Practice while supporting Alliances to serve as role models and test-beds for systemic European policy change, with a direct impact on the wider higher education sector. By bringing grassroots evidence on key policy discussions, be it joint degrees, legal entities, micro-credentials, or funding synergies directly to European and national decision-makers, FOREU4ALL ensures that Alliances' lived experiences directly inform legislative and policy evolution, strengthening evidence-based policymaking and ensuring a sustainable future for the European Universities Initiative.

Key Highlights

- **Flagship Policy Learning Labs (PLLs):** Dedicated spaces bringing Alliance representatives into a productive and visible dialogue with the European Commission (DG EAC, DG RTD, DG INTPA), Member State representatives, and higher education stakeholders.
- **High-Level Exchanges**: Regular exchanges with Cabinet Members of Commissioner Mînzatu and Zaharieva, participation of FOREU4ALL Chair and Co-Coordinators at the Rectors' Meeting in 2026 and 2025, and accompanying of EVP Mînzatu during her visit to the US in September 2026.
- **Member State Impact:** Direct engagement and agenda-setting at the Cyprus EU Presidency Meeting of Directors General for Higher Education (DG HE) in Nicosia in May 2026 and regular exchanges with research and education attaches from Brussels-based Permanent Representations (first held in February 2025, second planned for January 2027).
- **Evidence-Based Consultations**: Active contribution to calls for evidence, surveys, focus groups and other forms of policy-oriented consultations launched by the European Commission and Executive Agencies (EACEA, DG EAC, DG RTD, DG EMPL, EHESO, REA). Provision of concrete evidence-based examples, best practices, operational gaps, and policy recommendations. Examples include the co-facilitation of break-out sessions during the Alliance Coordinators' Retreat in April 2026 (contributions from R&I, Mobility, Project Management, Impact, Internationalisation & Global Outreach, Regional Innovation Ecosystems and other Topical Groups), the co-creation and co-moderation of the EHESO policy workshop on Alliance monitoring in October 2026, or contributions to calls for evidence for joint PhDs, the future of the Marie Sklodowska Curie Actions, FP10 priorities, Alliances' role in the completion of the ERA, or the European Student Card Initiative.
- **Parliamentary Engagement:** Regular exchanges with Parliamentary offices. Feedback for major EU reports, including direct contributions to the European

Parliament's CULT Committee report on European Universities Alliances and definition of the Alliances.

- **Systemic Ecosystem Synergies:** Joint initiatives and active collaboration with higher education stakeholders (e.g. EUA, The Guild, ACA), student representative bodies (e.g. ESU, ESN), national agencies (NAs), and sister project networks (e.g. Future4Alliances, SPREAD EUI).

1. Introduction: Policy Engagement within FOREU4ALL

Deliverable D3.1 provides an overview of FOREU4ALL's policy engagement and representation, including information on involved stakeholders and policymakers and generated impact. It further informs and builds upon Deliverable D3.2 Policy Learning Lab Recommendations – Edition I, Deliverable D1.4 on evaluation of external engagement, Deliverable D1.6 on evaluation of cross-Alliance collaboration and external representation, and Deliverables D2.2 and D2.4 on Topical Group activities and Workshops, respectively.

1.1 Main Actors

Policy engagement within FOREU4ALL is primarily conducted under the umbrella of **Work Package 3 – Policy Dialogue (WP3)** that brings together a group of experienced Alliance policy experts with extensive networks and direct contacts with policymakers. However, policy engagement within FOREU4ALL is a transversal activity that goes beyond the working plan of one single Work Package. Rather, it is structured around a continuous exchange architecture between Alliance practitioners at different governance levels, European Commission officials and representatives of Executive Agencies, Members of the European Parliament, Member State representatives, and higher education stakeholders.

General Forum

The **General Forum**, bringing together all coordinators of European Universities Alliances and Seals of Excellence, provides space for direct exchange on policy-relevant issues in a plenary setting. Multiple EU representatives have been invited to participate

at the General Forum to provide updates, answer questions and use the present Alliances as a sounding board for upcoming policy priorities, be it on topics connected to the European Degree Label, UK's re-accession to Erasmus+ or the upcoming consultations on Alliances 2.0. For more information on the external engagement and cross-Alliance representation function of the General Forum, see Deliverables D1.4 and D1.6.

Forum Board

The **Forum Board**, which comprises 15 Alliance representatives elected for a yearly mandate, also plays a key role in policy discussions. Serving as the "executive body" of FOREU4ALL, the Forum Board is in charge of preparing the agenda for General Forum and leads in-depth discussions on ongoing policy developments and the Alliances' possible positioning. The Forum Board also represents FOREU4ALL externally at various events, conferences, focus groups, and consultations, in accordance with members' interests and expertise. The FOREU4ALL Project Management Team and Central Office also take part in the Forum Board as its permanent members.

The representative function of the Forum Board is further strengthened by the election of a **Chair** and two **Vice-Chairs** who act as the "external faces" of FOREU4ALL and provide strategic orientations, in close cooperation with FOREU4ALL Co-Coordinators and the WP3 team. The Chair and Vice-Chairs act as ambassadors of the Community of Practice, representing FOREU4ALL at high-profile meetings and international visits, be it the Alliance Coordinators Retreat in April 2026, the DG HE Meeting in Cyprus in May 2026, the Rectors Meeting in Brussels in June 2026, EVP Mînzatu's visit to the US in September 2026, or the ASEAN Policy Dialogue in the Philippines in October 2026 organised under the auspices of the SCOPE-HE project supported by DG INTPA.

These high-profile executive and international visits come on top of regular meetings and exchanges with relevant policymakers, be it Cabinet Members of Commissioners Mînzatu and Zaharieva, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), Member State representatives, or regional authorities.

In terms of concrete outputs, Forum Board members have been regularly consulted by policymakers on numerous policy developments and strategic priorities, most recently during a policy workshop on Alliances' possible future monitoring framework jointly co-facilitated by the European Higher Education Sector Observatory (EHESO) or a strategic meeting with DG EAC about Alliances' role and possible contributions to the Global Europe agenda, which came up as a direct follow-up to EVP Mînzatu's US visit.

Aside from discussions with policymakers, the Forum Board also produces policy-oriented discussion statements. In November 2025, a **Discussion Paper** titled "European Universities Alliances: Beating Heart of Europe's Future" was presented, putting forward a vision for the future of the European Universities Initiative and (funding) mechanisms necessary to enable and support the implementation of Alliances' missions. The Discussion Paper was shared with a broad range of European Commission directorates, MEPs, national and regional authorities and higher education stakeholders to a generally positive reception, opening up a deeper dialogue on Alliances' role in major policy files.

Moreover, two policy-focused **workshops** led by the Forum Board are currently under development. These are in addition to the capacity-building workshops organised by Topical Group members under the WP2 framework, for more information on those, please see Deliverable D2.4. Both policy workshops will be open to participation of the General Forum (Alliance coordinators) and Chairing Teams of the FOREU4ALL Topical Groups (TGs), bringing together over 2000 experts across 20 thematic fields. The first workshop is scheduled for November 9 and its purpose is to gather input for the forthcoming Alliances 2.0 concept, included in Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's Letter of Intent accompanying her 2026 State of the Union speech. Using the above-mentioned Discussion Paper as a starting point, the workshop aims to update and broaden its originally stated vision under the Alliances 2.0 heading. Results of this workshop will then directly inform the upcoming Call for Evidence and stakeholder consultations on this topic organized by DG EAC.

The second workshop moves from vision to concrete proposals regarding the possible format of the future Investment Pathway for European Universities Alliances. As a collaborative effort between Forum Board members, WP3 members, and external stakeholders, this workshop aims to prepare a series of analyses of currently existing funding instruments, identifying their positives, negatives and necessary modifications for Alliances' use. These analytical documents will be further elaborated on and "tested" during an online workshop with the wider FOREU4ALL Community and regularly consulted with DG EAC to ensure relevance and legal feasibility. The outcomes of the workshop should also be presented and further built upon at the V European Universities Forum in Kaunas in March 2027 and the adjacent DG HE meeting. For more information on the external engagement and cross-Alliance representation function of the Forum Board, Chair, Vice Chairs, the Project Management Team and the Central Office, see Deliverables D1.4 and D1.6.

Topical Groups

The FOREU4ALL Topical Groups (TGs) also play a key and active role in policy discussions. With 20 thematic TGs, FOREU4ALL engages more than 2000 Alliance experts. These experts bring forward a breadth of knowledge and experience from the very core of Alliance functioning, sharing best practices, ongoing challenges and concrete examples of innovative practices. Given their direct expertise from the ground, TG experts are regularly invited to participate in policy consultations, surveys, and focus groups, directly strengthening evidence-based policymaking. They also regularly represent FOREU4ALL at relevant events, be it as speakers, presenters, panel moderators, or workshop facilitators.

TG experts played a particularly important role at the last Alliance Coordinators' Retreat in April 2026. Here, the co-Chairs of the R&I, Mobility, Impact, Project Management, Internationalisation & Global Outreach, Cooperation with Ukraine, and Regional Innovation Ecosystems TGs were directly consulted on the most salient topics to be included in the programme and co-facilitated their respective thematic sessions. This is, however, just one example of TGs engagement in policy discussions. More information

can be found below and in Deliverable D2.2 recounting the first year of Topical Group activities.

Apart from specific policy consultations, the Topical Groups focus on policy also in their other activities, be it through the invitation of external guest speakers and policymakers to TG meetings, organisation of thematic and policy-relevant webinars, or in-person/hybrid workshops. So far, FOREU4ALL has organized 4 in-person/hybrid workshops focused on the European Degree (Venice, December 2025), Project Management and Impact (Granada, April 2026), Community Engagement (Strasbourg, June 2026), and Sharing of Research Infrastructures (Poitiers, October 2026). Another workshop focused on the Union of Skills and Micro-credentials will be hosted in December 2026 (St Polten), with three more workshops coming up in 2027 and 2028.

Workshop proposals are submitted by an interdisciplinary team of 2-3 Topical Groups, ensuring broader appeal of the selected topics across the Alliance Community. Proposals are evaluated by a selection committee, assessing the topic's salience for the Alliance community, quality of the proposal, added benefit of an in-person format, and, last but not least, policy relevance. This ensures that conducted workshops are reflective of the ongoing policy debates and strategic priorities and can help provide concrete evidence and recommendations for the future. For this reason, despite the bottom-up nature of the workshop and their main focus on peer exchange and capacity-building among participating Alliance representatives, each workshop organizing team makes sure that relevant policymakers are also present in the discussions and that a concrete follow-up takes place after the workshop's conclusion. For more information about the workshops conducted thus far and their policy recommendations, please see Deliverable D2.4.

WP3 is in close collaboration with the TGs and makes direct use of their expertise and recommendations. After the announcement of each workshop selection, the WP3 team scrutinizes unselected workshop proposals, identifying those of special policy relevance. These are then further elaborated on within the framework of WP3 activities, either as Policy Learning Labs or background material for meetings with policymakers. Right now,

a series of Policy Learning Labs on the International dimension of European Universities Alliances is taking place, as a direct result of a collaboration between WP3 and TGs Internationalisation & Global Outreach and Cooperation with Ukraine. For more information on conducted Policy Learning Labs and their connection to the activities of Topical Group experts, please see Deliverable D3.2 or the FOREU4ALL website.

Work Package 3: Policy Dialogue

As mentioned above, despite the multi-level nature of policy engagement within FOREU4ALL, the majority of policy-related discussions are raised and facilitated by WP3 – Policy Dialogue. This is maintained through five core mechanisms:

- **Dedicated Monthly WP3 Policy Exchanges:** Each monthly WP3 meeting embeds a dedicated 30-to-45-minute policy segment. These sessions provide a space for Alliance representatives to contextualize new EU and national policy initiatives and developments, evaluate emerging legislative proposals, and coordinate joint responses and possible outreach activities, be it to national representatives or EU-level policymakers.
- **Key Policy Focus Areas & Targeted Surveys (2024-2025):** Each year, the WP3 team pays particular interest to a selected policy topic with the greatest strategic importance. In the period of 2024-2025, the Policy Dialogue team prioritized two systemic policy themes: capacity-building of policy sensitivity within the Alliances, which was further addressed in its first Policy Learning Lab (see below and in Deliverable S3.2 for more information), and the then forthcoming **European Degree Label** and associated **Quality Assurance (QA)** mechanisms. In close collaboration with TGs European Degree and Joint Programmes and Quality Assurance, WP3 launched a series of surveys in October 2025, followed by further analytical iterations in November 2025 and March 2026, in order to map the current provisions of joint degrees across the Alliances and their plans for the future. The resulting empirical evidence directly informed the WP2 Policy Workshop in Venice (December 2025). The results of the survey and the

subsequent WP2 workshop were also shared with the Executive Agency and European Commission representatives, providing evidence of best practices but also concrete feedback on implementation barriers and recommendations for the future. See Deliverable D2.4 for more details or the FOREU4ALL website.

- **Policy Learning Labs (PLLs):** These flagship Policy Dialogue events bring together Alliance experts, relevant European, national and regional policymakers, higher education stakeholders, and external analysts to collectively discuss the most salient policy topics related to the Alliances, exchange experiences and showcase concrete evidence. To date, four Policy Learning Labs have taken place. The first one provided a capacity-building session on the importance of policy engagement among the Alliances (June 2025), the second one focused on funding sustainability (April 2026), followed by a launch webinar of the Internationalisation series (June 2026) and its first deep dive session focused on the UK (October 2026). Additional deep dive sessions on Ukraine (November 2026), Switzerland, Western Balkans and Global Europe (Global Gateway, Mediterranean University Initiative, Choose Europe, ASEAN collaboration) will be rolled out in the rest of 2026 and 2027 and will conclude with a final on-site workshop organized in collaboration with TGs Internationalisation & Global Outreach and Cooperation with Ukraine. Additional Policy Learning Labs will be included over the course of the next two years, directly responding to ongoing policy developments and amplifying the voices of the Alliances on the policy stage. For more information on conducted Policy Learning Labs, concrete policy recommendations, and their connection to the activities of TG experts, please see Deliverable D3.2. Recorded PLLs can also be accessed via the FOREU4ALL website and Youtube channel.
- **Collaboration with the Topical Groups:** Aside from co-organisation of thematic PLLs, WP3 engages with the TGs on an almost daily basis. This spans discussions about ongoing policy developments, gathering evidence-based examples and best practices (e.g. legal status iterations within the Alliances), requesting help

with the development of simple policy briefs (e.g. explanatory brief on the European Degree) or supporting interested TGs in their own policy efforts, be it the development of thinkpieces, policy recommendations or targeted topical campaigns. Whenever relevant, TG experts are invited to WP3 monthly meetings to present their ongoing work, discuss challenges and use Policy Dialogue members as a sounding board regarding their approach and next steps. For more information on TG activities, please see Deliverable D2.2.

- **Monthly Policy Updates on Microsoft Teams:** Regular, curated policy updates published across the WP3 Policy Dialogue and General channels on the shared FOREU4ALL Microsoft Teams space, ensuring that the most important policy updates and new initiatives, consultation opportunities, calls for evidence, and relevant events are shared across the whole Community, helping to prepare the leadership of the Alliances.
- **Monthly Policy Heatmaps:** Distributed across WP3, the General Forum, and Work Package 2 (Community of Practice) with its 20 Topical Groups and over 2000 experts, these heatmaps are directly based on the provided monthly policy updates, highlighting key EU policy files, explaining their relevance for the work of the Alliances, and directly identifying the most fitting TGs for possible follow up.

1.2 FOREU4ALL's Strategic Identity: Community of Practice vs. Stakeholder Organisation

As partly elaborated already in Deliverable D1.4 on external engagement, one of the central challenges in FOREU4ALL's governance is managing the balance between its role as an internal Alliance-oriented **Community of Practice** (i.e. focused on peer learning, capacity-building, and sharing of best practices) and its role in driving Alliances' external representation and **policy impact**. Despite FOREU4ALL being an Erasmus+ funded project with a clear Consortium Agreement and Description of Action, the shifting policy environment, demands from policymakers and external stakeholders, and increased expectations from the Community of Practice to be represented by FOREU4ALL

externally have at times moved FOREU4ALL into a delicate position, where it is almost expected to act as an established advocacy group or a higher education stakeholder, despite being established as a Community of Practice.

This is, in many ways, not surprising. Given that it allows for direct access to 65 Alliances and 8 Seals of Excellence and provides on-the-ground expertise across 20 Topical Groups with over 2000 active experts, FOREU4ALL is seen as a key link / entry point to the "Alliance bubble", which makes it a key actor for policy consultations by the European Commission, Executive Agencies, European Parliament, and other external stakeholders. As such, FOREU4ALL is seen as a trusted laboratory, providing evidence-based examples and serving as a sounding board for testing and refining policy. The same applies to the other side as well. With its relative ease of access to relevant policymakers, FOREU4ALL is perceived as a legitimate entity representing and amplifying the voices of the Alliances externally.

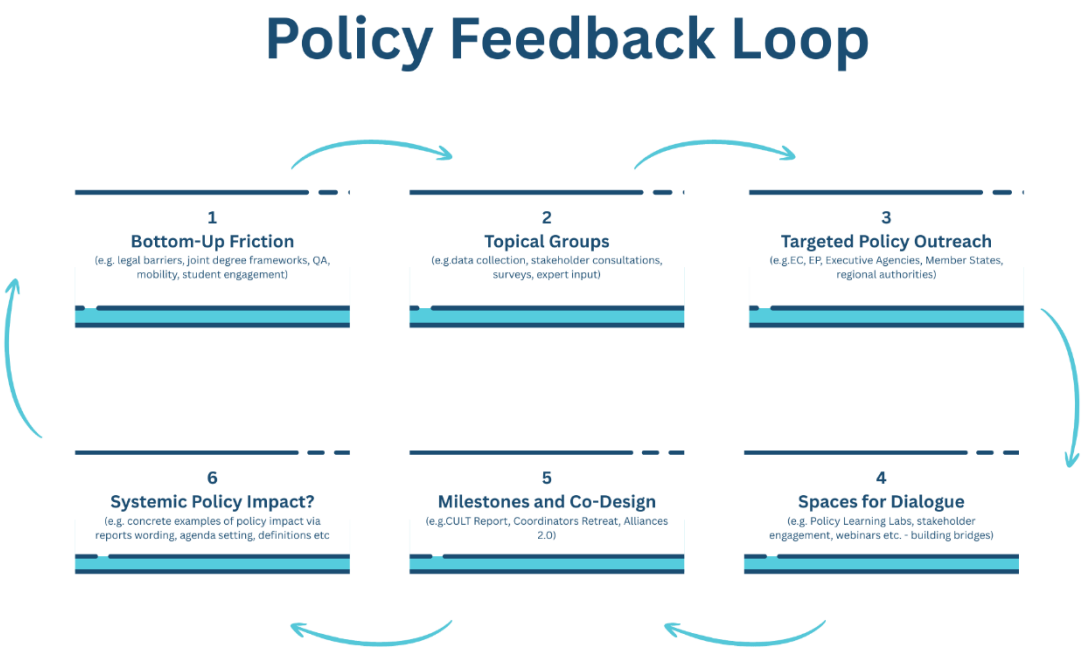
In order to navigate this situation and strike some balance, FOREU4ALL has decided to keep its policy activities strictly focused on topics directly related to the Alliances, leaving any broader sectoral discussions to the already existing higher education stakeholders. Moreover, to create good relationships with them and avoid duplication, FOREU4ALL has been in active collaboration with the wider higher education sector, either via its annual or bi-annual meetings, which provide an open platform for exchange on latest policy developments and identification of possible collaboration opportunities, or via its External Advisory Board (ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE, ESN), which are directly engaged in various FOREU4ALL activities and provide targeted advice. Over the course of the first 20 months of the project, wider sector advocacy organisations got a better understanding about the position of FOREU4ALL and possible forms of collaboration in higher education advocacy, which its existence opened up. For more information, please see Deliverable D1.4 diving into the topic of external engagement in more detail, including the role and functioning of FOREU4ALL's External Advisory Board.

For this reason, whenever higher education stakeholders are invited to provide formal political advocacy or legislative positioning (e.g. specific amendments for Erasmus+ or Horizon Europe), FOREU4ALL deliberately steps back, leaving umbrella organisations and university networks to lead these discussions. This non-lobbying posture protects FOREU4ALL's role as an objective, credible, and evidence-based Community of Practice, spotlighting the work and role-model potential of the Alliances and serving as a bridge between the Alliance Community, policymakers, and the wider sector, without intervening in policy discussions not directly related to the Alliances themselves.

2. Context, Scope & Strategic Methodology

2.1 The Policy Feedback Loop

Rather than functioning as a simple log of organized meeting and events, Deliverable D3.1 captures the substance, reach, and concrete impact of selected policy engagements. Based on the information provided in this document, the FOREU4ALL's policy engagement strategy could be summarized as follows:



Picture 1: Policy Feedback Loop

2.2 Conceptualizing Impact: Enablers, Incubators, and Connectors

Within WP3, policy impact is defined rather broadly. It is not merely data collection of a number of meetings with policymakers organized during the year. Rather, it is about information exchange, building a policy sensitivity among the Alliances, agenda setting, opening up a dialogue, bringing diverse stakeholders to the same table, establishing long-term relationships, and serving as a trusted partner for policymakers and the wider sector alike.

- **Incubators of Ideas:** Alliances act as real-world laboratories and test-beds of novel concepts and policy experimentations (e.g. the European Degree Label, shared R&I infrastructures, EGTC application etc.). FOREU4ALL helps to spotlight these practices, collect best practices, and strengthen evidence-based policymaking, drawing from its pool of over 2000 experts and Alliance coordinators.
- **Bridges and Connectors:** Translating concrete systemic roadblocks, operational challenges and lessons-learnt identified by the TGs (e.g. quality assurance, micro-credentials, European Student Card Initiative) into strategic recommendations for EU-level and national authorities.
- **Nurturing the Community:** Amplifying Alliance voices on European and national levels, while respecting the diversity of thematic and institutional models. Focus on the role-model potential of Alliances and the possible spillover effect of their innovative practices to the wider sector, via collaboration with EUI "sister projects" SPREAD EUI and Future4Alliances. For more information about FOREU4ALL's collaboration with "sister projects" and outreach to non-Alliance Higher Education Institutions, please consult Deliverable D1.4 on external engagement.

3. Selected Policy Milestones

The section below provides a selection of key policy milestones that have been achieved in the first two years of the project. Please note that this section is far from exhaustive,

as it serves to showcase concrete examples with the biggest impact rather than provide a full log of policy-related activities. In case of interest, please see Annex II for more details.

3.1 Member State Engagement: Key Highlight – DG HE Meeting in Cyprus

The Meeting of Directors General for Higher Education under the Cyprus EU Presidency (May 2026, Nicosia) represented one of the most significant policy milestones during this reporting period. Organised at a time when European institutions and Member States have been shaping their priorities for the post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the meeting provided a platform to openly exchange on Member States' understanding of the role of the Alliances and to align Alliance developments with national policy strategies.

FOREU4ALL was officially invited to join this high-level event and present in the central session entitled **"European Universities Alliances: Beating Heart of Europe's Future"**. The delegation consisted of different FOREU4ALL governance levels (Vice-Chair, Forum Board and WP3 Member, Project Management Team Member / Work Package 4 Co-Lead) and a wide diversity of Alliances (SEA-EU, E3UDRES2, ENHANCE). Please see Annex I for more information.

The session was preceded by a keynote speech from the Rector of the University of Cyprus, Tasos Christofides (YUFE Alliance), who set the scene by showcasing the added value of Alliances in innovative teaching, joint programmes, student mobility, research capacity, and core European values, necessary for deep cooperation and resilience. In its own contribution, the FOREU4ALL delegation further showcased the scale and main achievements of the European Universities Alliances to date, illustrated on concrete examples from FOREU4ALL and their respective Alliances. This contribution then gave way to an active discussion with the present Directors General, some of whom have not been aware yet of the Initiative's scale and relevance for the wider higher education sector and their respective national contexts.

This exchange clearly demonstrated that Alliances have matured from pilot projects into long-term strategic partnerships rooted in deep collaboration, prompting follow-up discussions with Member State delegates on questions of long-term sustainability of the Initiative, shared governance / ownership, and targeted queries regarding the European Degree Label implementation, student governance, QA, legal entities, R&I capacities, geographic balance, and digital platform interoperability.

Key Outcomes

Some concrete outcomes of this meeting can be consulted below:

- **Regular Ministerial Exchange Mechanism:** Widespread consensus was reached that Directors General meetings should serve as a regular platform for exchange between the Alliances represented by FOREU4ALL, Member States, and the European Commission.
- **Irish Presidency Engagement:** Informal agreements had been established with Irish delegates to integrate Member State involvement into the July 2026 IV European Universities Forum in Maynooth, where some Ministry representatives, notably from Austria and Ireland, were actively present. The Forum programme and list of invited stakeholders was partly co-shaped by FOREU4ALL to ensure continuity of ongoing discussions.
- **Lithuanian Presidency:** Preliminary discussions were initiated with Lithuanian representatives to include Alliance policy topics in the early 2027 DG HE meeting, accompanied by a dedicated workshop. Since then, Kaunas University of Technology has decided to host the V European Universities Forum in March 2027 under the Lithuanian Presidency programme and FOREU4ALL is once again actively engaged in its preparation.

However, FOREU4ALL is actively pursuing also other forms of Member State engagement and national-/regional-level awareness-raising, including:

- **Engagement with Attaches**: WP3 hosts regular annual/bi-annual meetings with Brussels-based research and education attaches in order to share updates about the Alliances, answer questions about their concrete operational realities, discuss national impact and possible future support. The first meeting of this kind was organized in February 2025, with another one coming up in January 2027.
- **Collaboration with Individual Ministries**: TG Cooperation with Ukraine co-organized a Prague/Kyiv Workshop on Alliance Cooperation with Ukraine (October 2025) alongside the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) and the Czech National Agency (DZS). Concrete plans were formulated for integrating Ukrainian and Moldovan universities into Alliance activities and possible forms of support. Moreover, a representative of the French Ministry participated at the 2nd FOREU4ALL Workshop on Project Management and Impact in Granada (April 2026), an Austrian Ministry representative provided a Member State perspective on national support for Alliances during the 2nd FOREU4ALL PLL (April 2026), a Greek and a French representative exchanged views on national challenges and possible forms of uptake during a follow-up Impact and Project Management webinar (October 2026), and both French and Austrian Ministries also contributed to a keynote panel discussion at the 4th FOREU4ALL Workshop on Sharing Research Infrastructures in Poitiers (October 2026). FOREU4ALL also actively collaborates with the Future4Alliances project, bringing together 13 Member State representatives, which significantly enhances its national- and regional-level outreach strategy.
- **Contacts with National Agencies**: As the primary entry point to national higher education systems and higher education institutions not participating in the Alliances, National Agencies play a key role in fostering broader outreach and raising awareness of Alliances' work and impact. In order to strengthen this spillover effect and the role-model potential of the Alliances,

FOREU4ALL is in active contact with the SPREAD EUI project led by a selected number of National Agencies, co-organising events and other outreach activities directly aimed at national-level dissemination.

- **Regional Collaboration**: TG Regional Innovation Ecosystems contributed to an event on Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) Alignment with regional innovation ecosystems and long-term Alliance sustainability, organized during the SUNRISE annual coordination meeting (February 2026), with a direct participation of various regional bodies, including Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes.

Ongoing Challenges

While FOREU4ALL tries to stay actively engaged on national and regional levels, its capacities in this respect are naturally limited, given its role as a pan-European Community of Practice. As was made obvious during a mid-term reflection exercise conducted with Alliance Coordinators and TG Chairing Teams in October 2026, national and regional-level policy engagement and advocacy stays primarily in the hands of individual Alliances and national groups/networks who are locally embedded and knowledgeable of the respective context, and therefore inherently more effective in this respect. While it is important for the Policy Dialogue team to stay informed about ongoing national and regional developments, be it via regular policy exchanges during WP3 meetings or the monthly policy updates published on Teams, main focus should stay directed towards EU-level policymakers. These are perceived as generally easier to engage, especially because a significant part of the WP3 team is already based in Brussels or travels here frequently and can therefore make an easier use of their wide networks of contacts and personal involvement in stakeholder organisations. FOREU4ALL therefore provides a European framework through its WP3 exchanges and shares key policy information with national groups of Alliances to support coordinated national advocacy, but leaves direct policy engagements on national/regional level to local stakeholders.

Having said that, given the importance of Member State support for the future sustainability of the European Universities Initiative, Member State engagement still remains a priority. Higher education legislation remains fragmented across the 27 Member States and occasional sceptical voices in specific international contexts (such as critical feedback during past Higher Education meetings of the Informal Group of R&I Liaison Offices – IGLO) highlights the need for continued engagement in targeting Member States and their respective Ministries. This will primarily be done via continuous collaboration with Directors General for Higher Education at future DG HE meetings, regular exchanges with research and education attaches from permanent representations, more active engagement of Member State representatives at upcoming EUI Forums, and through FOREU4ALL's cooperation with its "sister projects", especially Future4Alliances and SPREAD EUI focused on the Member States and National Agencies, respectively. However, it is also important to note that while there is often support from Ministries for the European Universities Initiative, general higher education budgetary constraints dictate the potentiality of funding and level of active engagement, influenced by government leadership and specific intricacies of each national political context.

FOREU4ALL WP3 members are also continually informed about advocacy activities conducted by the Erasmus+ Coalition, which brings together 81 EU-wide networks aiming to improve the programme's implementation and advocate on behalf of beneficiaries during the MFF negotiations. Concrete opportunities to disseminate the Coalition's actions and strengthen their advocacy efforts by individual Alliance partners in their respective countries are regularly discussed during WP3 monthly to strengthen collective action.

3.2 European Commission: Key Highlight – Visit to the US with EVP Mînzatu and Coordinators' Working Retreat Co-Creation

In order to stay informed about ongoing policy developments and strategic priorities and share these with the wider Community, FOREU4ALL holds bi-weekly meetings with

DG EAC. These do not only serve as spaces for open exchange and Community updates but also provide an opportunity to share concrete outputs and real-time evidence from the TGs, including latest publications or data collection results, thus helping to directly inform EU policy developments.

However, cooperation with the European Commission goes beyond DG EAC, even if relationships with them are naturally the most active, given that the European Universities Alliances is an Erasmus+-funded Initiative. Having said that, the mission of the Alliances covers all four corners of the knowledge square, including education, research, innovation and societal engagement. For this reason, FOREU4ALL has established contacts and sometimes even very close collaboration also with other services of the European Commission, be it DG RTD for discussions on Alliances' role in the completion of the European Research Area (ERA), international partnerships, attracting talent and the Choose Europe Agenda, joint PhDs, sharing of research infrastructure, and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions; DG INTPA regarding the Global Europe programme; DG ENEST for questions concerning cooperation with Ukraine and enlargement countries; or DG EMPL when it comes to the Union of Skills, micro-credentials, and challenge-based learning. This collaboration takes many forms and goes way beyond simple information-sharing or occasional. FOREU4ALL is regularly asked to provide expert input, conduct data collection, or participate in consultations. Both sides also actively contribute to each other's thematic workshops or webinars.

Over the past two years, FOREU4ALL has experienced an increased interest from policymakers in collaborating with FOREU4ALL and its TGs, which gather over 2000 experts from across Europe. Spanning surveys (e.g. Alliances' collaboration with UK and Swiss universities; Joint Degrees; Micro-credentials), focus groups (e.g. QA, European Student Card Initiative, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions) or direct consultations (research infrastructures, joint PhDs, FOREU4ALL has been recognized as a trusted partner and invited to directly co-create the current policy landscape. This was probably the most visible during the **European Universities Coordinators' Working Retreat** (April

2026), which FOREU4ALL helped co-design and co-facilitate, alongside DG EAC colleagues and other invited experts.

TG members helped design and co-moderated key breakout sessions at the April 2026 Retreat: TG R&I focused on Alliances' role in completing the ERA; TG Mobility led discussions on the future Erasmus+ framework; TG Regional Innovation Ecosystems presented their best-practice mapping on regional competitiveness; TG Impact co-designed a session on capturing institutional transformation; TG Project Management contributed to discussions on future reporting templates; and TG Internationalisation & Global Outreach led discussions on Global Gateway priorities and science diplomacy. Moreover, the FOREU4ALL Chair and Vice Chair shared the stage with key DG EAC representatives at the Opening and Closing sessions, symbolically showcasing an equal standing. This shared ownership was much appreciated by the Alliance Coordinators and helped to make the Community of Practice even more effective and interested in policy matters, as the co-creative nature of the sessions made them see the importance and impact of their work much more tangibly.

This collaboration with TG experts and other parts of the FOREU4ALL governing structures is ongoing. As already mentioned above, European Commission representatives are regularly invited to participate and provide updates at the FOREU4ALL General Forum, Policy Learning Labs, WP2 Workshops and bi-annual meetings with the "sister projects", ensuring alignment and identification of new engagement opportunities. The elected Chair and Vice Chairs, in accordance with project Co-Coordinators and alongside the Forum Board and the Project Management Team, regularly participate at high-level policy discussions with Commission Cabinet Members, represent FOREU4ALL at policy-relevant events, and lead discussions with higher education stakeholders (please see Deliverable D1.4 for more information), actively shaping the policy landscape.

Once again, TGs play a key role here, being actively consulted regarding the Alliances' daily operational realities and systematic challenges. Over the past few months, they

have provided input on a wide range of subjects, from Mobility definitions (see Mobility Thinkpiece for more information), Impact assessments (see Impact Assessment Case Studies for more information), Project Management monitoring and reporting templates (see Workshop 2 recommendations for more information), to the Alliances' possible contribution to FP10 and ERA (R&I TG), Global Europe (Internationalisation & Global Engagement TG), Cooperation with Ukraine and Enlargement Countries (Cooperation with Ukraine TG), Digital Interoperability (IT & Digitalisation TG), Legals Frameworks and EGTC adaptation (Governance & Legal Frameworks TG), European Degree Label (European Degree and joint programmes TG), role of students (Student-led Community TG), or the European Competitiveness Fund (Regional Innovation Ecosystems TG). A selection of concrete examples can be found below and in Annex II but please see also Deliverables D2.2 and D2.4 or the FOREU4ALL website for more information.

Key Outcomes

- **High-Level Executive Engagements:** FOREU4ALL Chair joined Executive Vice-President Mînzatu on an official visit to US universities in Boston in September 2026. The FOREU4ALL Governance Board is currently in discussions with EVP Mînzatu's Cabinet and DG EAC about follow-up actions, including the possibility of including transatlantic universities as associated partners in Alliances as soon as possible with a possible funding injection from Global Europe post 2028.
- **April 2026 Coordinators Retreat:** Several TG experts have been invited to directly contribute to this event and co-facilitate thematic break-out sessions. **TG R&I** delivered its presentation on "How could Alliances contribute to ERA completion". This is in addition to previous data collection on Joint PhDs shared with DG RTD and a second Discussion Paper currently under preparation, which will subsequently be shared with the Cabinet of Commissioner Zaharieva and relevant Commission DGs. **TG Mobility** led a dedicated working session on mobility frameworks and the future Erasmus+ programme. **TG Regional Innovation Ecosystems** produced a best-practice mapping on how Alliances

contribute to regional innovation and European competitiveness. **TG Internationalisation & Global Outreach** facilitated a break-out session and held follow-up exchanges with DG EAC on the international dimension of Alliances, including global engagement, science diplomacy, talent attraction, and future internationalisation frameworks. **TG Impact** has maintained regular exchanges with DG EAC on capturing the transformational role of Alliances, including a dedicated session during the Retreat. Last but not least, **TG Project Management** developed structured exchanges with DG EAC/EACEA on reporting and implementation and co-delivered a related session at the Retreat together with EACEA.

- **Global Dimension**: TG Internationalisation & Global Outreach conducted direct exchanges with DG EAC and DG INTPA focused on Global Gateway priorities, science diplomacy, geopolitical engagement, talent attraction, global competitiveness, and the strategic positioning of Alliances beyond Europe. Moreover, FOREU4ALL Vice-Chair participated in a high-level Policy Dialogue in Manila, Philippines, to discuss European transnational educational collaboration and the European Universities Initiative, organized under the framework of the SCOPE-HE project supported by DG INTPA.
- **Ukraine & Enlargement Dialogue**: TG Cooperation with Ukraine maintained recurring policy dialogues with DG EAC and EVP Mînzatu's Cabinet regarding accession preparation, long-term cooperation with Ukrainian and Moldovan universities, and post-Prague/Kyiv workshop follow-up proposals.
- **EGTC Modifications**: TG Governance & Legal Frameworks provided input to DG EAC regarding necessary EGTC modifications to become fit for purpose for Alliance activities.
- **ERA, FP10 & Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA):** In June 2026, TG R&I submitted a consolidated input paper to DG EAC regarding MSCA under FP10. The submission advocated for 4-year Doctoral Networks, adapted mobility rules for Alliance doctoral candidates, and funding support for shared research

infrastructures. TG R&I also hosted representatives from DG RTD Unit A.2 during several of their meetings, focusing on the ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027, the ERA Act and joint PhDs. Moreover, FOREU4ALL contributed with its insights on joint PhDs (challenges and opportunities) to the first ERA Structural Policy on Improving the Articulation between R&I and Higher Education on Higher Education Institutions as ecosystem anchors (December 2025).

- **European Degree Forum, European Student Card Initiative, EHESO Student Observatory**: TG Student-Led Community participated at the invitation of DG EAC in the inaugural European Degree Forum in Florence, bringing direct student-led perspectives from European Universities Alliances into the policy discourse. The TG was also invited to participate in a focus group on the European Student Card Initiative and to provide feedback on the beta version of EHESO's upcoming Student Observatory platform. They also moderated the 'Contextual information & Synergies' breakout session at a related EHESO workshop.
- **European Degree Label**: TG Quality Assurance contributed to consultations on national barriers to implementation of the European Degree Label, bringing Alliance QA expertise into exchanges with DG EAC and PPMI. European Commission representatives also contributed to a TG QA public webinar on Alliance-level external quality assurance. TG European Degree and joint programmes was also in active discussions with DG EAC during the last stages of the European Degree Label preparations and provided concrete policy recommendations after its Workshop in Venice in December 2025. See Deliverable D2.4 or the FOREU4ALL website for more details.
- **Union of Skills**: TG ALLIES working on life-long learning are currently in active collaboration with DG EMPL in preparation of their upcoming workshop on the Union of Skills and micro-credentials, to be held in St Pölten in December 2026. An accompanying survey co-designed with DG EMPL to collect input on the implementation of the 2022 Council recommendation on micro-credentials has

been shared with Alliance Coordinators and will directly feed into the workshop content and subsequent policy recommendations.

Ongoing Challenges

The frequency and magnitude of FOREU4ALL's engagement with the European Commission Directorates serves as clear evidence of FOREU4ALL's recognition as a trusted partner and policy co-creator. The breadth of on-the-ground knowledge coming from the TG experts, Alliance Coordinators and members of FOREU4ALL governance structures helps to bridge the world of the Alliances with respective decision-making bodies, directly strengthening evidence-based policymaking.

However, it is important to note that FOREU4ALL exists primarily as a Community of Practice. It is nurtured through voluntary contributions of Alliance representatives who committed to collectively developing the project on top of their regular responsibilities in their respective Alliances for the benefit of the EUI initiative as a whole. This limited capacity means that data collection and drafting often takes longer than it might have under different circumstances, requiring greater flexibility for consultation deadlines and scheduling. Due to these constraints, not all requests can be dealt with to allow TG experts to dedicate sufficient time to their own work plans and peer exchanges, which lie at the core of the Community of Practice.

Moreover, given that FOREU4ALL brings together all 65 fully funded European Universities Alliances and 8 Seals of Excellence, it is not always feasible or desirable to speak with a unified voice but rather showcase the diversity of profiles and needs of participating Alliances. This makes collective positioning or statements more difficult to achieve but not impossible, as can be seen on the example of the FOREU4ALL Discussion Paper published in November 2025.

Going forward, it is necessary to continue targeted outreach to other Commission services beyond DG EAC to raise awareness of the Alliances' potential and ongoing contributions to the Commission's key priorities, including the European Research Area

(DG RTD), European Competitiveness Fund (DG GROW), Global Europe (DG INTPA, DG ENEST, DG MENA), Union of Skills and Employability (DG EMPL) and others, showcasing concrete practical examples and sharing recommendations. In fact, FOREU4ALL, and the Policy Dialogue in particular, have a strong track-record of bringing policymakers across different DGs to the same table. To mention just one example, the Policy Learning Lab launching the Internationalisation series in June 2026 created a cross-DG dialogue between DG EAC, DG RTD and DG INTPA, collectively presenting and discussing different forms of international partnerships in higher education and R&I and the role of Alliances in further strengthening and benefitting from these.

3.3 European Parliament: Key Highlight – CULT Report Feedback

Engagement with the European Parliament focuses primarily on 1-1 outreach meetings and information-sharing with relevant MEPs with a primary focus on the CULT and ITRE Committees. These include, among others, Laurence Farreng, Lina Galvez, Brigitte van den Berg, Nela Riehl, Christian Ehler, Marcos Ros Sempere, or Nina Carberry.

The purpose of these meetings is to raise awareness of FOREU4ALL and the European Universities Initiative, share updates and evidence-based examples, discuss challenges regarding the Alliances' operational realities, and strengthen support for the initiative across different Committees. The aim is also to provide direct feedback to relevant parliamentary reports and highlight the long-term structural needs of Alliances under future budget cycles.

In this vein, FOREU4ALL coordinated feedback across Alliances represented in WP3 regarding MEP Laurence Farreng's parliamentary report "On a new vision for the European Universities Alliances". The following elements have been included in the consolidated feedback message and helped shape the final wording of the report, including a definition of the Alliances.

Key Outcomes

- **Addressing Short-Term Project Logic**: Advocated for moving away from short-term, competitive project funding cycles toward stable, multi-annual operational funding under MFF 2028-2034.
- **Removal of Restrictive Criteria**: Campaigned for the removal of proposed restrictive evaluation criteria that would have imposed unnecessary administrative burdens.
- **Reframing Legal Entities**: Reframed the parliamentary perspective on legal status, steering recommendations away from viewing legal entities as mandatory instruments for partner integration, and presenting them instead as flexible toolkits for operational coordination and resource pooling.
- **Equitable International Partnerships**: Adjusted language regarding international engagement to emphasize equitable partnerships built on academic freedom and shared values.

Ongoing Challenges

Parliamentary turnover following the 2024 European Parliament elections and very busy legislative schedules make maintaining consistent contact with MEPs particularly challenging. Even though the WP3 team actively reached out to newly elected MEPs in relevant Committees and managed to establish active contact with a great number of them, tangible results remain limited. However, despite these hurdles, such meetings still successfully laid the groundwork for a broader support coalition, raising awareness about the European Universities Alliances, and established recurring contact channels with newly elected MEPs, which is seen as a largely positive outcome.

Looking forward, it is necessary to go beyond 1:1 exchanges with already convinced MEPs and aim to create a broader support coalition, bringing together MEPs across party affiliations and Committees, including CULT, ITRE and BUDG. A major win would be the establishment of an annual event on the Alliances hosted in the European Parliament. The WP3 team is currently discussing this possibility with one interested MEP and is hoping to see tangible progress already in 2027.

3.4 Executive Agency (EACEA) and Higher Education Sector Observatory (EHESO): Key Highlight – Workshops and Policy Recommendations

Engagement with the **European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)** and the **European Higher Education Sector Observatory (EHESO)** is an important part of FOREU4ALL's policy efforts with a direct impact on Alliances' reporting and monitoring frameworks and impact assessment.

Key Outcomes

Through a regular engagement between **EACEA** and the Project Management and Impact TGs, important clarifications regarding lump-sum guidelines have been provided, directly improving administrative consistency across the Alliances. EACEA was also invited to participate at the FOREU4ALL Impact and Project Management Workshop in Granada in April 2026, opening up a possibility for an in-person exchange and discussion of concrete bottlenecks and structural challenges, which standard reporting templates and review meetings rarely manage to capture. The outcomes of the workshop also include a concrete list of policy recommendations. These are currently being discussed between the workshop organisers and representatives of DG EAC and EACEA and are further elaborated on in accompanying webinars regarding concrete next steps and implementation processes within the wider FOREU4ALL Community and individual Alliances. More information on TGs engagement with EACEA can be found in Deliverable D2.2, while the Workshop recommendations can be accessed via Deliverable D2.4 or directly on the FOREU4ALL website.

In October 2026, **EHESO** hosted its **third online policy workshop** in close collaboration and co-creation with FOREU4ALL. Bringing together nearly 200 participants, including Alliance representatives, the European Commission, EACEA officials, and key higher education stakeholders, the workshop served as a vital consultation platform to discuss how EHESO's evidence base and analytical tools could possibly better support the European Universities Initiative in reporting and internal strategic planning, emphasising

the need to measure structural impact without imposing administrative burdens or duplicating existing reporting mechanisms.

Through six parallel breakout sessions co-moderated by EHESO and FOREU4ALL representatives, participants had a chance to examine existing EHESO tools and discuss possible data gaps, concrete applications, and possible modifications that would make them more suitable for the Alliances' context. This event presented yet another policy milestone in FOREU4ALL's work, strengthening its role as a bridge-builder between different stakeholders, while providing direct practitioner feedback to help further shape the existing data collection instruments and ensure robust evidence-based policymaking. As a concrete example, the student survey has been modified in its final stages of preparation to add necessary clarifications about short-term mobility. This collaboration is further strengthened through FOREU4ALL's membership in the **EHESO Policy Advisory Board**, which allows it to provide more in-depth feedback on strategic priorities and newly developed instruments, making sure that the needs of the Alliances remain reflected in the Observatory's work and remain helpful for the wider Community.

Moreover, FOREU4ALL is in active contact also with other Agencies and EU-adjacent institutions. For instance, policy advisers from the **European Research Executive Agency (REA)**, Unit C4, requested evidence from FOREU4ALL on research careers and mobility for the development of the ERA Act. TG R&I consolidated evidence, best practices and obstacles and responded to follow-up queries. In another vein, TG IT & Digitalisation is actively involved in the **European Digital Education Hub (EDEH)**, helping to shape the future of interoperability and digital education. Last but not least, the **European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO)** also showed interest in a deeper collaboration with FOREU4ALL. FOREU4ALL contributed to an EUIPO meeting on 28 October 2026 and a webinar will be co-organised in the upcoming months to discuss the role of intellectual property in the context of the European Innovation Act and AI Act and the role that Alliances can play in this respect. Members of the FOREU4ALL General Forum and

interested Topical Groups will be invited to participate, with the hope of identifying concrete avenues for future collaboration.

Ongoing Challenges

Given the diversity and complex nature of the Alliances, aligning standard short-term project guidelines with the long-term mission and institutional transformation of the Alliances and their partner universities remains an ongoing challenge. However, active engagement with EACEA and the Project Management and Impact TGs has been instrumental for creating a trusted relationship and identifying concrete spaces for improvement.

Moreover, FOREU4ALL's collaboration with EHESO regarding data collection and possible contribution to the future monitoring framework of the Alliances has also been instrumental in order to identify existing challenges, gaps and limitations of the current instruments in a timely manner and propose modifications necessary to improve their future efficiency and usability. All of these discussions will continue in the upcoming months and years, helping to collectively create an enabling structural environment for the future development of the European Universities Initiative.

It is almost important to mention that this active multi-stakeholder collaboration has its limitations. The growing number of collaboration requests coming from all sides presents a real challenge. On the one hand, active engagement in policy discussions and contribution to evidence-based policymaking is crucial for the co-creation of the future of the European Universities Initiative. However, FOREU4ALL already operates at full capacity and sometimes even beyond it, which requires an honest discussion about the future sustainability of this level of engagement and possible necessary modifications and governance streamlining.

3.5 Higher Education Sector Stakeholder Networks

Fostering relationships and an active dialogue with higher education stakeholders is one of the key missions of FOREU4ALL. FOREU4ALL engages with the broader sector through

its External Advisory Board meetings (EUA, EURASHE, ENQA, ESU, ESN), bi-annual/annual stakeholder exchanges (e.g. The Guild, ACA, Coimbra Group) and active contribution to external events, conferences and data collection practices, ensuring that Alliances are aware of wider sector developments and help strengthen the European Higher Education Area as a whole. For more information, please consult Deliverable D1.4 on external engagement.

Key Outcomes

Higher education stakeholders have also been actively engaged in FOREU4ALL policy-related activities, joining as panellists and keynote speakers at WP2 Workshops, Topical Group webinars and meetings, and Policy Learning Labs, which helped to open up a three-way dialogue between the Alliances, higher education stakeholders, and relevant policymakers, establishing FOREU4ALL as a trusted partner and bridge-builder in the higher education sector. For more information, please see Deliverable D3.2 summarising all conducted Policy Learning Labs and their outcomes, Deliverables D2.2 and D2.4 recounting Topical Group activities and workshop results, and Deliverable D1.4 on external engagement.

Ongoing Challenges

At the beginning of the discussions about the future of the Erasmus+ Programme as part of the ongoing MFF negotiations, FOREU4ALL has been invited to actively participate in the sector negotiations alongside higher education stakeholder networks. After an internal debate, it was decided that FOREU4ALL should not join such discussions, since it is not an advocacy organisation but a Community of Practice of European Universities Alliances. For this reason, FOREU4ALL consciously refrains from co-signing formal sectoral declarations or proposing legislative amendments, leaving political advocacy to established sector umbrella bodies. However, when it comes to topics directly related to the Alliances, FOREU4ALL remains actively engaged in the ongoing discussions, collectively choosing avenues for the most impactful policy outreach on national, regional and EU levels.

4. Conclusion: Lessons Learnt and Next Steps

4.1 Key Lessons Learnt

- **Trusted Expert**: The growing interest in exchanging and collaborating with FOREU4ALL regarding policy matters shows that in only two years, the Community of Practice has managed to establish its position within the wider higher education sector and build a strong reputation as a trusted and expertise-led partner.
- **Practitioner Evidence Drives Policy Value:** Policymakers, particularly within the European Commission, rely on FOREU4ALL for synthesized, empirical data drawn directly from the operational experiences of the 20 TGs and a broader engagement with the Alliance Community via the General Forum, Forum Board and WP3 activities.
- **Member State Engagement is Vital for Long-Term Viability:** While FOREU4ALL's cooperation with EU-level policymakers is perceived as well established and effective by the Community, long-term Alliance sustainability requires addressing national legislative fragmentation and securing predictable national co-funding. FOREU4ALL does not, at the moment, have the capacity to more actively engage with national and regional authorities. As mentioned above, being a pan-European Community of Practice, FOREU4ALL is not best-positioned for national-/regional-level activities, as its presence and strength are mostly on the EU-level. National and regional engagement must therefore be primarily pursued by national/regional stakeholders and Alliance partners, knowledgeable of the local context and with pre-existing support and information networks. However, despite these limitations, FOREU4ALL will continue its policy dialogue with Member States through different means, be it through a continued dialogue with research and education attaches at the Permanent Representations in Brussels, via future editions of DG HE meetings, and through active collaboration with its EUI "sister projects", namely SPREAD EUI led by a group of National

Agencies, opening up avenues for collaboration with non-Allied higher education institutions, and Future4Alliances bringing together Member States.

- **Maintaining Non-Advocacy Boundaries Preserves Trust:** Operating strictly as an evidence-based Community of Practice, and declining to act as a political lobby group within the wider sector, ensures that FOREU4ALL remains a trusted partner across European institutions and higher education sector stakeholders, while continuing to amplify and showcase the voices and diversity of Alliances on the policy stage.

4.2 Recommendations for the Future

- **Outreach Beyond "Usual Suspects":** With the ongoing MFF negotiations and discussions about the future sustainability of the Alliances, it is necessary to engage with policymakers across the political spectrum and thematic departments. For the national and regional levels, this means going beyond Ministries of Education also to Ministries of Finance and Employment, as was seen during the recent advocacy actions by the Erasmus+ Coalition. As mentioned above, it is outside of FOREU4ALL's capacity to be actively engaged on a national/regional level. However, dissemination of relevant sector-led advocacy actions, information exchange with national alliance groups and active dialogue on national-/regional-level developments during WP3 monthly meetings would be a good way forward. For the European Parliament, this means the need to create a support coalition transversing party affiliations and Committees, bringing together representatives from CULT, ITRE and BUDG. The establishment of an annual event focused on the Alliances in the European Parliament would also be desired. For the European Commission, it is necessary to continue in a trilateral dialogue between DG EAC, DG RTD and DG GROW, with targeted outreach activities also to DG EMPL, ENEST, MENA and BUDG, as necessary.
- **Continued Engagement with Higher Education Stakeholders:** In order to achieve a broader policy impact, a more active engagement and collective action

with higher education stakeholder networks would be desirable to strengthen the narrative about Alliances' potential and possible contributions to key policy initiatives. This would also help strengthen advocacy work of individual Alliances on national and regional levels and an even more constructive engagement with EU-level policymakers across departments.

- **EU Council Presidency Sequencing:** Continue actively engaging and syncing activities with European Council Presidencies, including the upcoming Lithuanian Presidency, to further build upon successes and best practices from previous collaborations with the French, Spanish, Polish, Cypriot, and Irish colleagues. A list of upcoming Presidencies and key contact partners needs to be drafted in order to plan future targeted activities, going beyond the DG HE meetings and EUI Forums.
- **Role of Universities in Safeguarding Democracies:** Given the current (geo-)political context and increased threats to university establishments, a dialogue should be open about universities' role in safeguarding democracies and upholding European values, showcasing concrete case studies of Alliances with experiences with universities and scholars under increased risk. Such a dialogue should be organized transversally across FOREU4ALL Work Packages and TGs, possibly combining a WP2 Workshop with a dedicated Policy Learning Lab or a whole series of connected events.
- **Internal Governance Structures:** As mentioned above, as a Community of Practice bringing together 65 Alliances and 8 Seals of Excellence, FOREU4ALL's policy work is inherently multi-level, engaging all parts of its governance structure. While such a distribution of policy roles helps to ensure inclusivity and a continued representation of the diversity of the Alliance Community, it can sometimes lead to double policy steering, especially between the elected Forum Board with their Chair and Vice Chairs and the WP3 team dedicated to fostering policy dialogue. Moreover, Forum Board Members, including the Chair and Vice Chairs, are only elected for a 1-year mandate, with the possibility of one re-

election. However, policy work is a long-term process, which requires in-depth relationship-building and continuous engagement, and cannot be constantly re-launched after each annual election. An internal reflection within the Project Management Team is currently underway regarding possible modifications to the current governing structures in order to ensure increased efficiency and structural continuation, while avoiding duplication of roles. This reflection and modification process is directly rooted in the results of a stock-taking exercise conducted with Alliance Coordinators and TG Chairing Teams in October 2026 and an accompanying needs analysis survey. The outcomes will be reflected in the FOREU4ALL mid-term report and dully implemented in the second half of the project. Resolving these minor internal governance challenges will ultimately future-proof FOREU4ALL's role as a policy bridge, as the European Universities Initiative enters into its next structural phase.

- **Closer Collaboration with Topical Groups:** To make the work of WP3 more visible in the wider Community of Practice and ensure its continued relevance, it is necessary to strengthen its links with the activities of the TGs even more. The role of the Central Office, and WP2 and WP1/WP3 Project Officers in particular, is key here, ensuring timely information and identification of possible cross-synergies. TG members could also be given a permanent window at monthly WP3 meetings to present their ongoing policy-related work and discuss possible next steps. WP3 is organising an in-depth reflection meeting with all of its members at the end of November 2026 to discuss the overall functioning of the WP and possible modifications going forward, directly rooted in the feedback received at the recently conducted General Forum stock-taking exercise and needs analysis survey as well. The ambition is not to add extra activities but rather to simplify and strengthen the impact of already existing formats and channels, ensuring sustainability for the future.

5. Annexes

Annex I: DG HE Cyprus Meeting Official Session Proposal, Preparatory Materials & Delegation Summary

Annex II: Illustrative Log of Policy Meetings and Consultations and Topical Groups Policy Engagement

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