



2nd FOREU4ALL WORKSHOP

Aligning Project Management and Impact

REPORT

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Disclaimer

The content of this report reflects the discussions, views, and preliminary conclusions expressed by participants during the Granada workshop. It is based on exchanges within the community and aims to capture collective reflections and shared understandings at the time of the event.

The information presented should not be interpreted as official positions, validated guidance, or confirmed information from the European Commission or the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC). Any interpretations, assumptions, or conclusions remain those of the participants and do not necessarily reflect current policy decisions or formal positions.

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List of Abbreviations

CoP	Community of Practice
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
EACA	European Education and Culture Executive Agency
EDI	Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EHESO	European Higher Education Sector Observatory
ERA	European Research Area
EUA/ EUAs	European University Alliance/ European University Alliances
EUI	European University Initiative
FOREU4All	FORum of European Universities for All
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
PM	Project Management

Executive Summary

The 2nd FOREU4ALL Workshop “Aligning Project Management and Impact: A Practical and Strategic Dialogue for European University Alliances” brought together representatives from European University Alliances (EUAs), higher education stakeholders, policymakers, and experts to explore how project management and impact approaches can be better aligned to support long-term transformation in the European Higher Education Area.

Organised by the FOREU4ALL Project Management and Impact Topical Groups and hosted by the Arqus European University Alliance at the University of Granada, the workshop addressed the challenges arising from the coexistence of short-term project-based funding structures and the long-term transformational ambitions of EUAs. Across keynote discussions, interactive workshops, literacy sessions, poster exchanges, and co-creation activities, participants examined how management practices, data, impact assessment, communication, governance, and strategic planning can mutually reinforce each other.

The workshop identified five interconnected challenge areas:

- embedding impact in strategic planning and proposal design;
- improving data collection and analysis;
- strengthening evidence-informed decision-making;
- communicating performance, impact and societal value;
- and aligning project logic with Alliance-wide strategic objectives.

Discussions highlighted recurring barriers, including fragmented approaches, unclear roles and responsibilities, limited impact planning, difficulties in translating data into strategic action, and tensions between institutional priorities and Alliance ambitions.

Building on these reflections, participants collaboratively identified practical tools and proposed recommendations, including impact planning frameworks, shared data approaches, communication strategies, capacity-building actions, governance mechanisms, and knowledge-sharing structures. A joint roadmap was developed outlining short-, medium-, and long-term actions to strengthen impact-oriented management across Alliances in the future.

The workshop reinforced the understanding that project management and impact should not be treated as separate administrative requirements, but as interconnected drivers of sustainable institutional transformation. By fostering shared learning, collaboration, and practical experimentation, FOREU4ALL contributes to strengthening the collective capacity of European University Alliances to demonstrate and achieve meaningful long-term impact within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Preparation of the workshop

1. Context

According to Gunn (2020)¹, the European University Initiative (EUI) has two main goals: to promote European values and identity and to enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of European Higher Education. Both goals require effective project management and evidence-based impact assessment.

EUAs are funded through time-bound projects with expectations for short- to medium-term results. At the same time, they are tasked with delivering long-term systemic change, institutional transformation, and European integration. This creates a tension between project-based logic and strategic Alliances' goals, placing unique demands on project managers and impact officers.

According to the EU report on the outcomes and transformational potential of the EUI², there are five key areas of Alliances' impact: (1) transnational institutional cooperation and shared governance, (2) joint education provision and mobility, (3) cooperation with society and economy, (4) research and innovation, and (5) higher education system. Corazza et al. (2024)³ further emphasize that assessing impact requires a "metacognitive habit" and multi-stakeholder thinking, skills not yet widespread.

In many Alliances, project management and impact remain siloed, reducing strategic alignment and weakening the visibility of results. Reporting is often associated only with funders, yet internal reporting for governance and coordination is equally essential to steer Alliances toward transformation. Different audiences – including the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), the European Commission, Alliances' leadership, regional authorities, and civil society – require tailored, credible, and coherent information to guide decisions, shape policy, and ensure accountability.

2. Objectives

This workshop aimed to build a **strategic and practical dialogue between project management and impact** within EUAs. It offered a shared space for project managers and impact officers to explore how management and impact could mutually reinforce one another. Rather than treating management as a purely administrative function or impact as only a reporting obligation, the workshop highlighted their interconnected roles in driving and demonstrating transformative change.

¹ Gunn, A., 2020. The European universities initiative: A study of alliance formation in higher education. In European higher education area: Challenges for a new decade (pp. 13-30). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

² <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/european-universities-initiative/outcomes-and-potential>

³ Corazza, L., Marengo, F., Torchia, D. and Sargiacomo, M., 2024. Developing a societal impact evaluation framework for sustainable European University Alliances. Scientific Reports, 14(1), p.13052.

Participants engaged in peer exchange, guided discussions, and hands-on sessions to:

- **Clarify roles, expectations, and shared definitions** surrounding project management, impact, and performance reporting within EUAs, to foster a common understanding and strengthen collaboration between management and impact actors.
- **Explore and promote synergies between project management and impact approaches**, identifying how they can mutually reinforce strategic alignment, accountability, and continuous improvement—ultimately contributing to the long-term transformation agendas of Alliances.
- **Foster peer learning and co-creation**, enabling participants to reflect on current practices, surface shared challenges and opportunities, and co-develop a practical toolbox and roadmap for coordinated and impact-informed management across Alliances.

Ultimately, the workshop aimed to strengthen internal capacity and foster a culture of alignment and mutual learning. It also supported the alliances' collective policy voice by framing impact and management as co-drivers (not separate obligations) of transformation within the European Higher Education Area.

The Workshop programme (see Section 4) was structured around two major strands:

- Day 1: **Exploring challenges and learnings**
- Day 2: **Building a joint toolbox and roadmap**

More specifically, the programme was designed to address the following guiding questions:

- **WHY do Project Management and Impact matter for the future of European Universities?**
Opening Keynote Panel.
- **WHAT do Project Management and Impact mean in the context of the European University Alliances?**
Setting the Scene Session.
- **WHAT are the main challenges in aligning Project Management and Impact?**
Challenges Workshops and Poster Session.
- **HOW can Project and Impact Managers be better equipped to embed impact, strengthen reporting & communicating, leverage AI tools, integrate EDI, and maintain professional well-being?**
Raising Literacy Sessions.
- **WHICH tools and good practices can support effective Project and Impact Management?**
Toolbox Workshops and Poster Session.
- **WHAT is the way forward? Which follow-up actions should be prioritised?**
Roadmap Workshop, Conclusions and Closing Session.

Target groups

The workshop brought together project managers, impact managers and other representatives from EUAs, as well as external stakeholders involved in higher education. To ensure a rich exchange of experiences, foster mutual learning and the circulation of innovative approaches, there was a broad diversity from all generations of Alliances. In addition, selected external speakers and observers joined the workshop to enrich and enhance the outcomes and follow-up of the workshop in the European Higher Education Area

3. Practical information

The Workshop Aligning Project Management and Impact was organised by the Project Management and Impact Topical Groups of the FOREU4ALL initiative. The Workshop was hosted by the Arqus University Alliance and took place on 15-17 April 2026 at the University of Granada (Spain). In total, we received **371 registrations** (159 on-site registrations and 212 on-line registrations). Some on-site registrations were not accepted as they were duplications in registrations. There were some on-site registered persons who finally were not in the position to join the workshop in person because of travel challenges. The number of on-site participants accumulated to 131, from 57 Alliances (see Annex 2). External speakers included Higher Education researchers and experts, a member state representative, a European research organisation stakeholder, as well as a representative from EACEA (European Education and Culture Executive Agency).

Workshop sessions

1. Opening

Abstract:

The objective of this session was to welcome participants, set the overall context and present the workshop objectives, as well as provide practical information to the audience.

Speakers:

- Pedro Mercado Pacheco. Rector of the University Granada. Arqus Alliance.
- Jonas Salz. Chair of the FOREU4ALL Project Management Topical Group. Project Coordinator – YUFE Alliance.
- Glória Nunes Rodrigues. Co-chair of the FOREU4ALL Impact Topical Group. Impact Task Force Leader – ENLIGHT Alliance.

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HADDvfd8zfU>

Summary:

During the opening session the topical group chairs welcomed the participants to the 2nd FOREU4ALL Workshop and briefly introduced the Workshop's main objectives. This was followed by the welcoming speech by the Rector Pedro Mercado Pacheco. During his speech, the Rector highlighted the importance of European Universities Alliance Initiative for the future of the higher education sector and for the University of Granada. The Rector highlighted, in particular, the relevance of management and impact for the European University Alliances. For him, the EUAs are not “just projects”, but a powerful tool to transform higher education and research in Europe, as well as key drivers of transformation for European regions and societies. The University of Granada is fully committed to this vision. By connecting and co-creating with the different local ecosystem players (cities and regions), the Universities can create a better future for its students and citizens. FOREU4ALL is a great platform for exchange of good practices, for cooperation and collaboration and this is fundamental to create real systemic-change and impact.

2. Keynote Panel: Why Project Management and Impact Matter for the Future of European Universities?

Abstract:

This keynote panel explored the strategic importance of project management and impact within the European Universities Initiative. Bringing together perspectives from policy, higher education leadership and research, the discussion examined how European University Alliances can balance long-term

transformation ambitions with accountability requirements, evidence-based decision-making and increasingly complex and diverse governance environments.

Particular attention was given to the relationship between project-based funding structures and the broader institutional and systemic transformations expected from the Alliances. The session highlighted the need to move beyond viewing project management as an administrative function and impact as a reporting requirement, instead recognizing them both as interconnected drivers of sustainable transformation. The discussion established a common strategic frame of reference for the workshop and provided participants with key questions and reflections that informed the subsequent challenge, toolbox, and roadmap sessions.

The panel was intentionally composed to bring together complementary perspectives from policy, higher education leadership, and research. This combination enabled participants to explore the alignment of project management and impact from strategic, operational and systemic viewpoints while connecting Alliance experiences with broader European higher education and policy development.

Chair: Lucie Hunter. Project Manager & Policy Advisor. FOREU4ALL.

Panellists:

- Caroline Censier-Calmus. Senior Advisor European Universities France. French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.
- Jan Palmowski. Secretary-General of The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities.
- Antonin Charret. Research Fellow. University of Oxford.

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HADDvfd8zfU>

Discussion:

The discussion focused on the role of project management and impact as fundamental enablers of the European Universities Initiative and of the long-term transformation of higher education in Europe. Panellists reflected on how Alliances are expected to simultaneously deliver measurable short- and medium-term results while contributing to broader institutional, societal, and systemic change.

A recurring theme throughout the discussion was the tension between project logic and transformation logic. While Alliances operate through time-bound funding mechanisms and reporting requirements, their objectives extend far beyond individual project cycles. Our speakers emphasized that project management should not be understood solely as a compliance function, but as a strategic mechanism supporting coordination, learning, decision-making and hopefully institutional change, thus demonstrating impact. Similarly, impact was discussed not as an end-stage reporting exercise, but as an

ongoing process requiring intentional planning, monitoring, reflection and stakeholder engagement. The panel also highlighted the importance of evidence-informed decision-making.



Figure 1: Audience feedback on the biggest challenge in aligning project management and impact.

Another key topic concerned governance and organizational complexity. European University Alliances operate across multiple institutions, cultures, regulatory environments, and stakeholder groups. As a result, effective alignment between project management and impact requires clear governance structures, shared objectives, strong internal coordination mechanisms, and sustained institutional commitment. Participants noted that many of the challenges faced by Alliances are not purely technical, but relate to organizational culture, leadership, ownership, and the capacity to manage change collectively.

The discussion also reflected on the broader policy environment surrounding the European Universities Initiative. Questions were raised regarding the extent to which current funding, reporting, and evaluation frameworks adequately recognise long-term transformation processes. Participants highlighted the need for approaches that capture both immediate achievements and longer-term contributions to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and European Research Area (ERA).

Overall, the panel established a shared understanding that project management and impact should be viewed as mutually reinforcing dimensions of Alliance development. Their alignment is essential not only for accountability purposes, but also for supporting strategic decision-making, organisational learning, institutional transformation, and the long-term sustainability of European University Alliances.

3. Setting the Scene: What is Management and Impact in the European University Alliances context?

Abstract:

This presentation aimed to clarify how the FOREU4ALL Project Management and Impact Topical Groups understand and define their respective fields within the specific context of the European University Alliances. Framed as a structured conversation between the leaders of the two topical groups, the session unpacked the conceptual foundations, practical implications, and strategic ambitions behind “management” and “impact” in Alliance settings. It identified points of convergence and divergence, explored how both dimensions could reinforce each other, and established a shared language for the discussions that followed. The session set the conceptual baseline for the workshop and ensured a common frame of reference for all participants.

Speakers:

- Jonas Salz. Chair of the FOREU4ALL Project Management Topical Group. Project Coordinator – YUFE Alliance.
- Glória Nunes Rodrigues. Co-chair of the FOREU4ALL Impact Topical Group. Impact Task Force Leader – ENLIGHT Alliance.

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HADDvfd8zfU>

General Observations:

Throughout the session, the speakers used Mentimeter to gather insights from participants on their understanding and familiarity with the concepts of Project Management and Impact. Three questions were posed:

1. How familiar are you with aligning Project Management and Impact?
2. What is Project Management in the context of alliances? and,
3. What is Impact in the context of alliances?

Overall, most participants indicated a moderate to high level of familiarity with these concepts. This was reflected in their responses, which demonstrated a solid baseline understanding. When describing Project Management in the context of alliances, participants frequently used terms such as monitoring, coordination, reporting, and collaboration. In contrast, responses related to Impact were more strongly associated with ideas of transformation, change, and long-term outcomes.

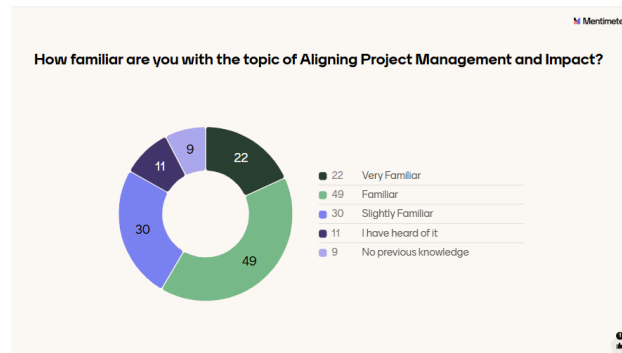


Figure 2: Participants' familiarity levels across workshop themes

The conference adopted a shared understanding of Impact as the broader, long-term change or transformation that alliances aim to achieve beyond immediate outputs. For Project Management, the definition emphasized characteristics that distinguish it from alliance management. In particular, Project Management was described as time-bound, performance-driven, and focused on specific deliverables, often guided by key performance indicators (KPIs).

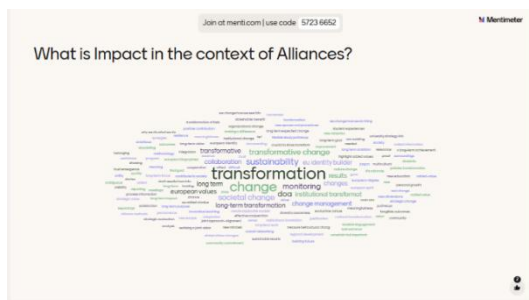


Figure 3: Audience understanding of Impact in the context of Alliances.

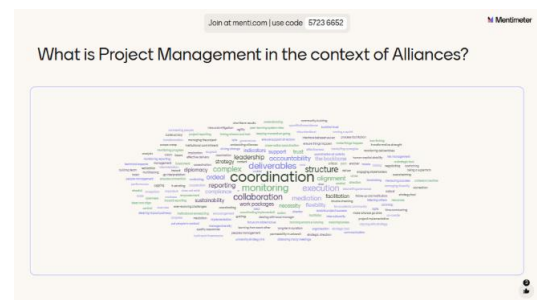


Figure 4: Audience understanding of Project Management in the context of Alliances.

Throughout the presentation, speakers emphasized the risks associated with unclear or inconsistent definitions. Misunderstandings around these concepts can lead to misalignment between Project Management processes and intended Impact, ultimately reducing effectiveness and limiting the contribution to long-term transformation goals.

To address this challenge, three key principles were introduced to guide participants over the course of the two-day discussion. These principles aimed to support better alignment between Project Management practices and Impact goals. To overcome the misalignment, three main principles were provided to the audience, which should carry out their discussion of the two days.

(1) Alignment between projects and Alliances

The duality of projects and Alliances must be complementary across all stages (design of proposals, activities and monitoring systems, implementation, communication and reporting, and decision-making) as well as in their organisational setup.

(2) Clarity of purpose

Reporting and assessment should have a clearly communicated purpose. Before requesting data, it must be clear what value it brings, both internally and externally, and how it will be used.

(3) Patience for transformation

Short-term metrics and snapshot evaluations risk missing the deeper, long-term changes that Alliances have already achieved and aim to achieve in the future.

4. Wall of Failures & Wall of Successes

Abstract:

The “Wall of Failures” and “Wall of Successes” were organized as a participatory reflection activity in the two days of the workshop. Participants were invited to share concrete experiences from their alliances related to impact management, coordination, governance, sustainability, and project management. The objective was to capture both challenges encountered and practices that have proven effective, creating a collective space for peer learning and exchange. Contributions were collected anonymously and aimed to generate practical insights that could be transferred, adapted, or further explored by other European University Alliances.

Wall of Failures:

Participants were invited to reflect on approaches, tools, activities, or organisational arrangements that had not produced the expected results within their Alliances. The contributions highlighted recurring challenges related to governance, strategic alignment, impact planning, data management, stakeholder engagement, and decision-making processes. While reflecting specific Alliance experiences, many of the observations pointed to broader structural issues commonly encountered when balancing project requirements with long-term Alliance ambitions.

Contributions included:

- Institutional priorities taking precedence over Alliance priorities.

- Failure to negotiate and agree on incentives and reward mechanisms for key target groups from the kick-off meeting onwards, both at local and Alliance level.
- Consensus-building processes taking so long that they may place project implementation at risk.
- Challenges related to the development of a joint mobility offer.
- Strategies and objectives that were not sufficiently specific.
- Unclear roles and undefined priorities.
- Absence of baseline data to assess the evolution of indicators and the contribution of Alliance activities over time.
- Specific objectives not sufficiently linked to key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Insufficient clarification of the roles and responsibilities of leaders, co-leaders, work package teams, and governance bodies.
- Difficulties in articulating and demonstrating the Alliance's societal value proposition.
- Lack of an impact plan from the kick-off phase of the project.

Wall of Successes:

Participants were also encouraged to share practices that have contributed positively to Alliance development and that could potentially be transferred to other European University Alliances. The contributions highlighted successful approaches to governance, collaboration, quality assurance, student engagement, communication, and institutional integration. Together, they provide examples of promising practices that may inspire further experimentation and adaptation across alliances.

Contributions included:

- Close collaboration between the Quality Assurance Office and the Work Package responsible for communication and dissemination, increasing the visibility of quality assurance activities across the Alliance.
- Institutional embedding of mobility offices within partner universities.
- Development of joint pedagogical guidelines to support innovative teaching and learning approaches within ULYSSEUS.
- Organisation of Q&A sessions in support of data collection processes.
- Student engagement practices within ERUA, where students are embedded in governance structures and act not only as co-creators but also as initiators of activities.
- Breaking down silos between work packages through the organisation of simultaneous or overlapping face-to-face work package meetings at the same institution.

- Governance structures that ensure the active participation of all partner institutions, as implemented within ULYSSEUS.
- Face-to-face meetings of Rectors twice per year to strengthen strategic alignment and decision-making.

General Observations:

The contributions collected through the “Wall of Failures” provide a valuable snapshot of recurring challenges faced by European University Alliances. Many of the issues identified resonate across Alliances at different stages of “maturity”, such as governance complexity, unclear roles and responsibilities, difficulties aligning institutional and Alliance priorities, limited impact planning and challenges related to data management. As such, the collection offers a useful reflection space for alliances seeking to anticipate common obstacles and strengthen their organizational approaches.

At the same time, the “Wall of Successes” highlights a range of promising practices demonstrating how alliances have addressed similar challenges through stronger collaboration, stakeholder engagement, improved governance arrangements, and enhanced coordination across work packages and institutions. These examples provide practical inspiration that other alliances may adapt to their own contexts and priorities.

Taken together, the two walls offered complementary perspectives: one capturing lesson learned from challenges and unsuccessful approaches, and the other showcasing promising practices that can support mutual learning & continuous improvement across the European Universities Initiative.

5. Workshop on Challenges in Aligning Project Management and Impact

Abstract:

This interactive World Café sessions explored the alignment of project management and impact management within European University Alliances. Bringing together participants across Alliances, the workshop aimed to build a shared diagnostic understanding of key structural challenges and generate a common language for discussing project management and impact. Participants worked in five parallel rooms, each addressing all five core challenge areas: planning for impact, data collection and analysis, evidence use in decision-making, communication and societal accountability, and the alignment of project and Alliance logics. Through five structured discussion rounds—moving from current manifestations to causes, tensions, risks, and emerging solutions—participants collaboratively developed insights building on previous group contributions. The session resulted in a structured overview of recurring challenge patterns, highlighted cross-cutting tensions, and enabled prioritisation of key issues. These outputs

formed the foundation for subsequent co-creation sessions focused on developing practical tools and pathways for strengthening impact-oriented Alliance development.

Facilitators:

- Audrey Sullivan-Reilly. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Officer. Circle U. Alliance.
- Angela Kipf. Quality & Impact Manager. EU GREEN Alliance.
- Lily Bethencourt. Project Oversight Manager. EUt+ Alliance
- Morris Villarroel. Associate Vice-rector. EELISA Alliance.
- Sannie van Boxtel. Institutional Coordinator. KreativEU Alliance.

Rapporteurs:

- Fernando Galán. Executive Director. EU-CONEXUS Alliance.
- Delfien Cloet. Project Manager. ENLIGHT Alliance.
- Patricia van Hemert. Project Manager. U!REKA Alliance.
- Julia Cora. Policy and Funding Advisor. YUFE Alliance.
- Laura Coló. Project Manager. 4EU+ Alliance.

Planning for Impact: Impact in EUAs Strategic Planning and Proposal Writing

General observations:

Planning for impact is still underdeveloped in many Alliances. It is often not embedded from the beginning in the Alliance logic, which makes it difficult to address later on. As a result, planning for impact is frequently only tackled at the reporting stage. There is also a lack of shared definitions and shared understanding of key concepts such as outputs, outcomes, impact, KPIs, performance, and transformation. These concepts are often mixed up.

The issue is not only methodological, but also strategic and organisational, which can lead to unclear ownership, weak institutional embedding, fragmented data, and limited alignment with QA, governance, and decision-making. Alliances are often too focused on KPIs and quantitative reporting, while qualitative evidence, reflection, and meaningful change receive less attention. A key question raised was: who defines impact? Is it the Alliance, the institutions, the funders, or other stakeholders?

Obstacles / underlying causes:

- Lack of shared methodology and concepts from the beginning
- Weak ownership and unclear responsibilities
- Limited integration into strategy and governance
- Fragmented systems and approaches

- Overemphasis on quantitative reporting

Tensions and trade-offs:

There is a strong tension between project logic and alliance logic. Alliances are engaged in short-term, output-oriented reporting, while aiming for long-term institutional transformation. Impact takes time. It is indirect, relational, and cumulative, and therefore harder to evidence than immediate outputs.

Risks:

- Weak reporting
- Missing opportunities for broader transformation at Alliance and ecosystem level

Key take-aways:

Impact must be built into the alliance from the very beginning, not added afterwards in reporting exercises. Ownership is crucial, and all elements are interlinked. While this may sound simple in theory, in practice it takes time and remains a challenge across alliances.

Data Collection and Analysis: How to Align and Combine Different Data Collection Processes

General observations:

Across Alliances, there is a consistent picture: the challenge is not the absence of data, but how data are coordinated, understood, and used. There are many data practices across alliances, both qualitative and quantitative. These methods are valuable but often lack purpose and alignment across work packages or institutions. The result is fragmentation rather than a coherent system.

Obstacles / underlying causes:

- No detailed Alliance-level data approach
- Lack of standards and guidance, making data difficult to compare
- Survey fatigue and low response rates
- Infrastructure gaps, with continued reliance on Excel and manual processes
- Unclear roles and limited expertise in data collection and analysis
- Data protection constraints and different GDPR interpretations across institutions

The challenge is therefore not only technical but also related to governance and organisational culture.

Tensions and trade-offs:

- Standardisation vs. flexibility

- Quantitative vs. qualitative data
- Alliance needs vs. institutional needs
- Efficiency vs. ethics (especially regarding sensitive data)
- While data collection is often seen as a shared responsibility, ownership and leadership are needed.

Risks:

- Declining data quality over time
- Inconsistencies when changing indicators or moving from manual to automated systems
- Risk of inflated or adjusted figures due to reporting pressure
- Gap between data collection and data use
- Focus on outputs and short-term outcomes while long-term impact remains invisible

Key take-aways:

If efforts are coordinated, approaches aligned, and sufficient capacity ensured, data can become more than a reporting requirement. It can support learning, improvement, and understanding of real impact.

[Evidence Management and Use: How you Inform Strategic Decision-Making; How to Maximise/Mitigate Desired/Undesired Effects.](#)

General observations:

The discussion focused on how data and evidence are used — or not used — to inform strategy and decision-making. The issue is not only technical, but systemic. Interpretation of data varies, which can lead to different diagnoses of problems. There is also a gap between assessment and action: translating data into management decisions is not automatic. Impact assessment is often a punctual exercise and not embedded into institutional routines or decision-making processes.

Obstacles / underlying causes:

- Data collection driven mainly by European Commission reporting requirements rather than strategic needs
- Institutional hierarchy differences affecting decision-making
- Limited authority of those working on project management and impact
- Lack of integration into governance and decision processes

Tensions and trade-offs:

- Short-term measurable delivery vs. long-term meaningful impact
- Alliance ambitions vs. institutional autonomy
- Evidence-based decision-making vs. governance realities
- Continuity vs. staff turnover and limited resources

Risks:

- Demotivation and disengagement when data are not used
- Decisions based on intuition rather than evidence
- Loss of credibility internally and externally
- Reduced long-term sustainability of alliances

Key take-aways:

The challenge is not the absence of data, but the difficulty of turning data into shared meaning, aligned decisions, and long-term strategic impact management.

Communication and Societal Accountability: How to Communicate EUAs Performance and Impact

General observations:

There was broad agreement that communication and societal engagement are central to achieving impact, but are currently fragmented, inconsistently understood, and often undervalued. There is a lack of clarity on what actually means communicating about impact. Questions raised include: what is impact, who defines it, and who are we communicating to?

There are disconnects between internal teams, external stakeholders, institutions, alliance structures, and communication professionals. Stakeholder engagement is often limited or uneven, and communication remains largely within academic circles.

Obstacles / underlying causes:

- Lack of shared understanding of impact and communication
- Unclear stakeholder identification
- Institutional silos and language barriers
- Limited resources and tools

Tensions and trade-offs:

- Tensions between centralised and decentralised communication

- Internal vs. external communication
- Communication vs. dissemination
- Centralised vs. decentralised approaches
- Academic focus vs. broader societal engagement

Risks:

- Loss of relevance if communication does not reach the right audiences
- Reputational damage
- Failure to demonstrate the value of public funding
- Perception of alliances as niche and not relevant to society

Key take-aways:

Communication is not just dissemination; it is strategic and transformative. Impact must be better articulated, co-defined, and communicated in accessible ways. Alliances need to shift from inward-looking to outward-facing approaches.

Aligning Project and Alliance Logics

General observations:

There is a strong structural challenge between project logic and alliance logic. Alliances are expected to deliver long-term transformation but operate within short-term project frameworks. Staff are often employed on temporary project funding, leading to instability and high turnover. Alliances' strategies are not always integrated into institutional strategy, reinforcing a project mentality. Roles such as project manager, alliance manager, secretary general and impact manager are often unclear. Responsibilities exist, but authority is limited.

Obstacles / underlying causes:

- Short-term and uncertain funding
- Temporary contracts and staff turnover
- Immature governance structures
- Limited integration of alliance strategy into institutional structures
- Lack of authority for implementation roles

Tensions and trade-offs:

- Short-term delivery vs. long-term transformation
- Project survival vs. sustainable impact
- Alliance coordination vs. institutional autonomy
- Responsibility vs. authority

Risks:

- Discontinuity and instability
- Alliances remaining niche projects without long-term structural impact
- Weak institutional integration
- Reduced opportunities for students
- Governance gaps and loss of strategic coherence

Key take-aways:

The challenges are deeply interlinked and cannot be solved individually. Alliances operate under different conditions and are at different stages of development. There is a strong need to share practices, learn from each other, and reinforce one another to address these challenges collectively.

Concluding reflection

A final cross-cutting reflection from the restitution was that these five challenges are closely interlinked and cannot be addressed separately. Planning for impact, data collection, evidence management and use, communication, and the alignment between project and alliance logics overlap significantly and reinforce one another. At the same time, Alliances differ in their maturity, context, and strategic pathways. Participants therefore stressed the importance of continued exchange of practices and experiences across Alliances, not only to diagnose problems, but to reinforce one another in developing shared solutions.

6. Raising Literacy Sessions

Following the workshop on challenges, the raising literacy sessions were planned in the afternoon of Day 1. They were specifically designed as practical capacity-building moments. Their purpose was to strengthen participants' ability to embed impact thinking into project management practice, and vice-versa, within the European University Alliances context. These sessions were expected to enable participants to leave with:

- Practical takeaways they can apply directly in their role within an Alliance.

- At least one concrete tool, template, or framework (even lightweight) that can be reused or adapted.
- A clearer understanding of how to improve their daily practice, in terms of skills, mindset, methods, and collaboration between Project Management and Impact functions.

The four literacy sessions focused on:

- Embedding impact in everyday project management: approaches to planning, evaluating, and managing Alliance outcomes.
- The power of storytelling: reporting and communicating Alliances' achievements.
- How to make the most of AI tools for effective project management and impact.
- How to embed diversity and inclusion in project management for impact.

It should be noted that a fifth raising literacy session was planned in the early stages of the workshop development, focusing on mental health and resilience of impact and project managers in EUAs. However, due to challenges in finding an expert for this topic (due to lack of financial resources to cover externals' travel, accommodation and work), this session had to be cancelled.

Session 1. Embedding Impact in Everyday Project Management: Approaches to Planning, Evaluating and Managing Alliance Outcomes

Abstract:

This session aimed to help participants understand how to integrate impact thinking into everyday project management, from planning activities to using results for learning and decision-making. The expected takeaways of the session included:

- Subjective dimensions such as collaboration, engagement, or satisfaction can be measured using appropriate qualitative and perception-based indicators.
- Effective management of an Alliance requires monitoring outcomes, not only activities or outputs, in order to understand the real changes generated.
- Practical tools and approaches exist that can help Alliances' plan, measure, and manage their impact in a structured way.

Expert:

- Ricardo Scacchetti. Founder & General Director. Impact Track.

Discussion/ learnings/ engagement formats:

The structure of the training was:

- A presentation on the key concepts of impact
- Planning for impact and tools to plan (focusing on Theory of Change)
- Managing impact in practice, in terms of project management and data collection
- A discussion on alliances' approaches so far in terms of why impact matters and steps taken to improve impact culture.

Discussion from the presentation resulted in some of the following points:

- The idea of focusing on intermediate results (outcomes) can be considered a practical and actionable way forward as Alliances further develop capacities.
- The systematic dimension of European University Alliances can make the formalization of a theory of change more challenging. It takes time to translate into a more concrete and operational perspective by framing the ecosystem actors as target stakeholders.
- Planning impact is a crucial aspect for the future development and implementation of Alliances, and it remains crucial that Alliances develop tools and insights to measure the impact of the world being done.

Session 2. The Power of Storytelling: Reporting and Communicating our Alliance Achievements

Abstract:

This training aimed to help participants understand how to combine reporting and storytelling to communicate Alliance achievements in a credible and meaningful way. It addressed the gap between the impact produced by European University Alliances and the way this impact is communicated to different audiences. The session highlighted that reporting provides evidence, while storytelling gives meaning to that evidence.

Experts:

- Marina Fernández-Peña. Head of Communications. Arqus European University Alliance.
- Armando-Urbe-Echeverria. Chief Communications Officer and Head of Impact and Dissemination Unit. EUTOPIA European University Alliance.
- Heather McComb. Digital Communications Manager. UNA EUROPA Alliance.

Discussion/ learning/ engagement formats:

The structure of the training was:

- A provocation exercise comparing two versions of the same story.
- A presentation on the spectrum between reporting and storytelling.
- An introduction to evidence-based impact storytelling as the “sweet spot” between accountability and meaning-making.
- A presentation of the five-element storytelling canvas: protagonist, context and challenge, Alliance response, result, and reflection.
- A hands-on exercise in which participants drafted an impact story based on one achievement from their own Alliance.
- A group reflection on how to identify storytelling opportunities in everyday project and impact work.

The session underlined that reporting and storytelling should not be seen as separate or competing practices. Reporting is essential to demonstrate outputs, KPIs, deliverables and milestones, but it may remain invisible if it is not connected to people, change and relevance. At the same time, storytelling needs evidence to remain credible.

Main takeaways from the training included:

- Impact communication should combine quantitative evidence with qualitative, human-centred examples.
- Every impact story needs a clear protagonist; the protagonist should be the person or group experiencing the change, not the institution.
- Alliances already have many stories within their activities, but these need to be identified, documented and connected to reporting processes.
- Communication is a professional and strategic discipline, requiring closer collaboration between project managers, impact managers and communication teams.
- The Storytelling Canvas offers a simple and reusable tool to translate Alliance achievements into credible impact stories.

Session 3. How to Make the Most of AI Tools for Effective Project Management and Impact

Abstract:

European University Alliances face increasing complexity in multi-partner coordination and impact assessment. This interactive workshop introduced generative AI as a practical tool for project management workflows, moving participants from aspirational thinking to hands-on application. Through live demonstrations, group discussions, and guided experimentation, participants explored how AI can

support common tasks (document synthesis, stakeholder reporting, action planning) while understanding critical constraints around data privacy and GDPR compliance. The session addressed realistic expectations, responsible use practices, and practical prompting techniques. The session drew on institutional implementation experience and the AI Strategy Compass framework to help participants identify immediately actionable applications for their Alliance work.

Experts:

- Ines Springael. Programme Lead CTL-AI. Breda University of Applied Sciences.
- Sannie van Boxtel. Institutional coordinator KreativEU. Breda University of Applied Sciences.

Discussion/Learning/Engagement Formats:

- Interactive Brainstorm: "Dream Big" exercise where participants identified ideal AI applications for their project management work without constraints, creating a reference list revisited at session end.
- Live Demonstration: Real-time demonstration converting project documentation (meeting transcripts, plans) into structured outputs (impact assessments, action lists, stakeholder summaries).
- Group Discussion: Facilitated conversations on data privacy, GDPR compliance, and determining appropriate vs. inappropriate information for AI processing.
- Hands-On Experimentation: Participants directly engaged with AI tools, asking them to explain capabilities and limitations specific to project management contexts, discovering functionality through guided dialogue.
- Applied Learning: Prompting technique training with before/after examples, followed by immediate application to participants' own use cases.
- Critical Reflection: Discussion of AI failure modes (hallucinations, sycophancy) and assessment of which "dream" applications are currently achievable, partially possible, or still future facing.

Session 4. How to Embed Diversity and Inclusion in Project Management for Impact

Abstract:

This session aimed to explore how diversity and inclusion (D&I) can be meaningfully embedded throughout the project management cycle and increase impact orientation of European University Alliances. Building on practical examples from Alliances, the session addressed how inclusive approaches can be integrated into planning, governance, management, decision-making, monitoring, and communication.

Experts:

- Melih Oezkardes (ENHANCE). Co-chairs of the FOREU4ALL Diversity & Inclusion Topical Group.
- Deirdre McQuillan (EUt+). Co-chairs of the FOREU4ALL Diversity & Inclusion Topical Group.

Discussions/ learnings/ engagement formats:

Participants reflected on real-life challenges and what opportunities that embed D&I bring to project management. The format of the workshop was centred around a “role play” exercise that was posed alongside input from the experts. The topics of the breakout groups for role play included:

- Data collection and monitoring
- Inclusive events and participation
- Active outreach and communication
- Governance (decision-making and representation)
- Training for neurodiverse learners

Main takeaways from the training included:

- Practical takeaways that can apply to project and impact manager’s roles in their Alliance
- At least one tool/ template/ framework (even lightweight) they can use
- Clearer understanding of how to improve their daily practice (skills, mindset, methods, collaboration between project management and impact).

Concluding Reflection

The four Raising Literacy sessions contributed to foster participants’ knowledge, skills and competencies, while providing them with practical tools to strengthen the daily work of project managers and impact managers in European University Alliances, and better align both practices. The sessions showed that impact-oriented management requires more than reporting on activities: it also involves planning for outcomes, communicating change, using tools responsibly, and embedding diversity and inclusion across project processes.

Taken together, the raising literacy sessions highlighted four complementary dimensions of Alliance work:

- integrating impact thinking into everyday project management;
- transforming evidence into meaningful and credible stories;
- exploring the responsible use of AI for coordination, synthesis and reporting;
- and ensuring that diversity and inclusion are embedded in governance, participation, monitoring and communication.

For project and impact managers, the added value of the sessions was their practical applicability. Participants were provided with frameworks, templates and methods that can be adapted to their own Alliance contexts. More broadly, the sessions reinforced the need for stronger collaboration between project management, impact, communication, data, governance and inclusion roles. This collaboration is essential to move from fragmented implementation towards more coherent, evidence-informed and transformative Alliance development.

7. Poster Session

A poster session was organised as an interactive component of the workshop to facilitate practice-based exchange between European University Alliances. Posters showcased concrete experiences related to aligning project management and impact, with a particular emphasis on transferable learning, including effective practices, challenges encountered, adaptations made, tools developed, and lessons applicable to other Alliances. Particular attention was given to how different Alliances organise and implement these processes within their own institutional contexts.

A dedicated timeslot was allocated to the poster session, during which participants circulated freely, engaged directly with poster representatives, and exchanged experiences and practical approaches. The posters also remained displayed throughout the workshop, encouraging continued discussion and informal peer learning across the two days.

The session contributed to the workshop objectives by fostering open dialogue, peer feedback, and mutual learning on implementation strategies, governance, monitoring, and institutional learning. All posters presented during the workshop are included in Annex 2.

8. Restitution of Day 1

Abstract:

This plenary session opened the second day of the workshop by revisiting the main insights from the five parallel challenge workshops held on Day 1. The rapporteurs synthesised recurring issues, structural barriers, reflections related to the alignment of project management and impact in European University Alliances. The session was explicitly framed as problem-oriented: not to suggest that alliances are underperforming, but to identify common challenges that arise in different forms and with different levels of urgency depending on each alliance's maturity, focus, and governance context.

Chair:

Audrey Sullivan-Reilly, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Officer, Circle U. Alliance

Rapporteurs:

- Fernando Galán. Executive Director. EU-CONEXUS Alliance.
- Julia Cora. Policy and Funding Advisor. YUFE Alliance.
- Laura Coló. Project Manager. 4EU+ Alliance.
- Patricia van Hemert. Project Manager. U!REKA Alliance.
- Delfien Cloet. Project Manager. ENLIGHT Alliance.

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9XwWi8teDnk>

The session began with a short welcome to Day 2 and a recap of Day 1. Participants were reminded that five workshop rooms had explored key challenge areas in the alignment between project management and impact. The restitution then presented the main reflections from across the rooms structured by challenge with particular attention to recurring patterns, underlying causes, tensions, risks, and key take-aways. While brief reflections on possible solutions and existing good practices were also part of the workshop discussions, the rapporteurs intentionally did not include these in the restitution in order to maintain a clear problem-oriented focus since the subsequent workshop sessions were designed to build on this analysis and translate it into structured, detailed, and outcome-oriented solution development.

9. Creating a Toolbox: How can we mutually reinforce each other?

Abstract:

This workshop explored the co-creation of a practical toolbox to strengthen alignment between project management and impact across EUAs. Building on previously identified challenges, participants shared experiences, identified transferable practices, and collaboratively developed actionable tools. The session resulted in a prioritised set of tools, alongside reflections on implementation conditions, risks, and enabling factors, supporting Alliances in improving coordination, accountability, and long-term transformative outcomes.

To ensure a practical and solution-oriented approach, each of the main five challenges identified during the Day 1 workshop sessions was addressed through a dedicated break-out workshop. Each session aimed to develop a concrete and actionable toolbox of methods, mechanisms and instruments to help Alliances tackle the specific challenge discussed.

Facilitators & Rapporteurs

Tools for Challenge 1- Planning for Impact

Facilitator: Glória Nunes Rodrigues. Impact Task Force Leader. ENLIGHT Alliance.

Rapporteur: Luisa Bernstorff. Director of Operations. Arqus Alliance.

Room A04: Tools for Challenge 2 - Data Collection and Analysis

Facilitator: Hannah Worringer. Impact and Quality Officer. ENHANCE Alliance.

Rapporteur: Helena Jestin. Project Manager. FORTHERM Alliance.

Room A05: Tools for Challenge 3 - Communication and Societal Accountability

Facilitator: Lily Bethencourt. Project Oversight Manager. EUt+ Alliance.

Rapporteur: Sofia D'Aguiar. Executive Director. EELISA Alliance.

Room A15: Tools for Challenge 4 - Management

Facilitator: Tove Holm. Local Manager at Nord University. SEA-EU Alliance.

Rapporteur: Tonia Schmitz. Secretary General. BAUHAUS4EU Alliance.

Room A25: Tools for Challenge 5 – How to Align Project with Alliance-logics?

Facilitator: Jonas Salz. Project Coordinator. YUFE Alliance.

Rapporteur: Vanessa Massegg. Coordinator. EURECA-PRO Alliance.

Tools for Challenge 1- Planning for Impact

This break-out workshop highlighted that planning for impact requires moving beyond isolated initiatives towards a more strategic approach at Alliance level. Participants stressed the importance of developing a clear Alliance strategic vision, supported by and aligned with appropriate governance mechanisms, practical planning tools, institutional capacities and trained staff, while ensuring a realistic and adaptable approach across different institutional contexts.

Among all the tools proposed by participants, three main categories of tools were identified. They were selected based on their relevance in addressing the challenge area, their added value across Alliances, and their practical applicability:

- Strategy-setting supported by appropriate planning tools
- Impact Observatory
- Training and capacity-building actions

For each of these tools, participants proposed a set of implementation steps, defined key conditions for success, and identified potential risks and resistance points.

(1) Strategy-setting supported by appropriate planning tools

Participants highlighted the importance of establishing a clear Alliance-wide strategic vision for impact, supported by appropriate planning (and monitoring) tools. Existing resources and frameworks — such as Impact Observatories, the ENLIGHT Impact Assessment Toolkit, and the Dutch Erasmus+ National Agency Impact Toolkit — were identified as valuable references that can help Alliances structure their reflection, define priorities, monitor progress, and support evidence-based decision-making.

However, participants stressed that such tools should not be implemented in isolation, but embedded within appropriate governance and coordination mechanisms, such as dedicated impact units, task forces, or cross-functional working groups, capable of ensuring continuity, ownership, and strategic alignment across the Alliance.

Implementation

Participants proposed first testing, selecting, and adapting existing tools to the specific context, maturity level, and priorities of each Alliance. This should be accompanied by the identification and engagement of key strategic stakeholders across governance and administrative structures in order to secure institutional buy-in and ownership. Capacity-building and training actions were also considered essential to facilitate understanding, adoption, and effective operationalisation of the selected tools and approaches.

Conditions for success

Key conditions for success identified included strong support and commitment from Alliance governance structures, access to impact expertise, and the allocation of sufficient time and resources to support implementation and coordination efforts.

Risks and resistance points

Participants also acknowledged several potential risks and resistance points, notably lack of institutional buy-in — particularly in contexts of governance or leadership changes — limited funding, and difficulties in identifying or mobilising the appropriate expertise required to lead and sustain such processes.

(2) Impact observatory

Participants identified the establishment of an Impact Observatory as a valuable mechanism to support a more structured, evidence-based, and continuous approach to impact monitoring and strategic decision-making within Alliances.

Implementation

Participants highlighted the need to first analyse the current state of play, followed by the identification of key stakeholders, their needs, expected outcomes and desired impacts. Participants stressed that the impact strategy underpinning the Observatory must be clearly defined and formally validated by Alliance leadership structures. Additional implementation steps include establishing data and evidence collection mechanisms, developing evidence-based impact stories, and validating the Observatory model and outputs at Alliance level.

Conditions for success

Conditions for success identified included a clearly defined scope and objectives for the Observatory and strong coherence between the Observatory and the Alliance's overall mission and priorities. Participants also highlighted the need of dedicated staff or task forces, and the availability of operational staff capable of supporting data collection.

Risks and resistance points

Participants also identified several risks and resistance points, including lack of institutional commitment, overly ambitious designs that may become unmanageable, survey fatigue among stakeholders, missing or fragmented data, excessive reliance on manual processes, insufficient IT tools and infrastructures for data collection, and a broader lack of impact knowledge, training, and institutional impact culture across the Alliance.

(3) Training and capacity-building actions

Participants highlighted training and capacity-building actions as essential enablers for embedding an impact-oriented culture across Alliances and ensuring the effective adoption of impact-related strategies, tools, and practices.

Implementation

Participants stressed the importance of first conducting a needs analysis tailored to the different target groups. The design of the activities should build on collaborative outcomes and shared priorities identified across the Alliance, while ensuring the availability of adequate resources, including trainers, expertise, and sufficient time allocation. Participants also underlined the need to carefully design the methodology, training formats, and learning evaluation mechanisms. Finally, training and capacity-building should follow an iterative implementation cycle, allowing continuous adaptation and improvement based on feedback, experience, and evolving Alliance needs.

Key conditions for success

Key conditions for success identified included strong institutional support and buy-in, recognition and incentives for participation, high-quality and relevant training content, methodologies adapted to the profiles and realities of different target groups, and a continuous improvement approach. Participants also stressed the importance of integrating equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) principles, while ensuring added value at multiple levels: individual, institutional, and Alliance-wide.

Risks

At the same time, participants acknowledged several risks and resistance points, including limited time and resources, varying levels of institutional buy-in and engagement, human factors, and the risk of work overload affecting both trainers and participants. Additional challenges identified included cultural, linguistic, and timing barriers across Alliance contexts, lack of shared understanding of impact-related concepts, staff turnover, and potential demotivation if training actions are not sufficiently recognised, relevant, or connected to participants needs.

Tools for Challenge 2 – Data Collection and Analysis

This session started with a joint understanding among participants that approaches for data collection and analysis need to be coordinated to see the real impact of European University Alliances in the long run. Overall, the tools suggested by the participants were sorted into three sections:

(1) Data Collection

Implementation

Participants voted for the development and use of a centralised system for data collection, with the Agora enterprise management system mentioned as one of the examples. Such a system needs to be integrated with learning management systems to unfold its full potential (currently lacking). Strategically speaking, participants identified the agreement on which data to share as the crucial first step for alliances. This was defined as a common data management plan and process.

Conditions for success

Alignment between governance bodies, availability of resources, cultural and institutional enablers.

Risks

(Lack of) future funding, lack of needs analysis/meta data definition, unwillingness to change, lack of technical support.

(2) Data Analysis

Implementation

Participants voted for staff trainings in data analysis and impact literacy as a key requirement for successful long-term implementation. Skilled staff needs to work in teams where both quantitative and qualitative data is analysed to gain a comprehensive understanding of project implementation and long-term outcomes as well as impact. The current alliance challenges were seen as potential training material for the development of a readily accessible micro-credential.

Conditions for success

Creativity and ambition of staff, understanding the culture of the organisation, flexibility.

Risks

Staff turnover, need for investments, sustainability.

(3) Data Presentation

Implementation

The use and display of integrated systems such as central databases and dashboards (i.e. MS Power BI) by some alliances is seen as a step in the right direction. Participants identified the availability of data on central infrastructure (i.e., website) as a benefit for all alliance stakeholders as it allows for evidence-based decision-making, improved communication, and informed strategies and operations. Participants highlighted the difference between public and internal data.

Conditions for success

Involvement of all stakeholders, willingness to display public data, investment in communication.

Risks

Misalignment between partners on what to present, lack of resources, GDPR issues, sustainability.

Overall, participants identified five key recommendations for successful implementation across all three sections:

- *People & staff:* Appoint motivated, ambitious impact ambassadors/observers and a dedicated manager; define clear responsibilities, roles and accountability, as they constitute the core “tool” for solving our challenges.

- *Methodology & training:* Build capacity in impact assessment, storytelling and impact literacy, and provide a practical toolkit to support these skills.
- *Centralised tools:* Deploy shared platforms for impact planning, data collection and visualisation and maintain a common repository that stores all alliances' resources, tools and knowledge.
- *Strategic alignment:* Ensure coherence between institutional strategies at the university and alliance levels, link them to the communication strategy, and place operational staff on strategic boards.
- *Beyond the project level:* Secure predictable funding and advocate for lighter reporting requirements (e.g., through lobbying EAC/EACEA) to enable sustained activities outside individual project cycles.

Tools for Challenge 3 – Communication and Societal Accountability

The tools identified by the end of the first session highlighted three main categories aimed at strengthening communication and impact within the Alliances. The first category addressed joint internal communication mechanisms, the second explored how audiences themselves can become communicators and multipliers of impact, and the third focused on storytelling and testimonials as tools for demonstrating change and engagement. In the end, each of these categories were represented by one tool, as follows:

(1) Impact Ambassadors

This activity focused on creating a network of “Impact Ambassadors” acting as representatives and multipliers of Alliance activities and values.

Implementation

The proposed implementation steps included recruiting ambassadors according to specific criteria, such as profile and involvement in Alliance activities, followed by onboarding and training activities. Training would include an introduction to the Alliance as well as storytelling techniques. Participants suggested that the ambassador mandate could last from six months to one year and be aligned with the academic calendar.

Conditions for success

Conditions for success include providing incentives, rewards, and recognition mechanisms to maintain engagement, as well as fostering collaboration among ambassadors through communities of practice and dedicated coordination spaces. Participants also stressed the importance of clearly defining the

ambassadors' remit, target audiences, and whether their role would focus on internal or external communication.

Risks

The main risks and resistance points identified were potential disengagement over time, turnover among ambassadors, and the challenge of ensuring sufficient time commitment alongside existing responsibilities.

(2) Framework for Internal Information Sharing

The second activity focused on establishing a structured framework for internal information sharing across the Alliance.

Implementation

Participants proposed building a professional communication structure with dedicated communication officers at institutional level. The framework would rely on shared protocols established from the beginning, based on a common communication strategy, review processes, and dissemination roadmaps, including coordinated campaign planning.

Conditions for success

Success factors included a clear definition of processes and responsibilities, the allocation of dedicated human resources, and strong alignment with institutional governance structures and vice-presidential leadership. Participants highlighted the importance of creating interfaces that ensure communication flows effectively both upwards and downwards within institutions and across the Alliance.

Risks

Risks and resistance points mainly concerned the high initial investment of time and coordination efforts required to establish the framework. Participants also noted that the absence of immediate visible results could generate demotivation, while misalignment, excessive workload over time, and lack of feedback could lead to detachment from the process.

(3) Impact Storytelling

The third activity explored the use of impact storytelling as a communication and dissemination tool.

Implementation

Participants proposed first identifying relevant stories at different levels, including individual, institutional, and Alliance-wide experiences. The next step would involve collecting and structuring these stories and identifying suitable impact ambassadors or contributors able to communicate them effectively.

Conditions for success

Conditions for success included ensuring that the stories clearly demonstrate impact and change, securing the willingness of key actors to participate and contribute, and selecting the most appropriate communication channels for dissemination. Participants stressed the importance of creating a recognisable narrative identity around the idea that the Alliances “have impact.”

Risks

The main risks identified included focusing on stories without sufficiently highlighting the actual change or impact generated, lacking relevant or representative examples, losing sight of the intended scope and objectives, or using communication channels that are not adapted to the target audiences.

Tools for Challenge 4 – Management

Throughout the management-focused toolbox session, participants demonstrated a shared understanding that strengthening governance, coordination, and internal communication is essential to better align project management practices with impact objectives across alliances. A key message was that effective management tools must be both practical and adaptable, enabling integration into daily operations while supporting long-term strategic alignment. Overall, the tools suggested by participants were grouped into four main areas.

(1) Impact Literacy Toolkit

Implementation

Participants highlighted the importance of developing a shared understanding of impact across alliances. This included creating a common glossary, training materials, and short guides to support staff in embedding impact thinking into their daily work. Integration of impact literacy into meetings, onboarding processes, and internal communication was seen as essential.

Conditions for success

Successful implementation requires strong institutional support and commitment from leadership, alongside inclusive co-creation processes that involve different stakeholders across the organisation.

Clear, accessible, and practical language is important to ensure that the toolkit can be understood and applied by diverse groups. Embedding the toolkit at different organisational levels — from leadership to operational teams — is critical to ensure long-term adoption and meaningful use.

Risks

Potential risks include limited time and engagement from staff, resulting in the toolkit not being fully integrated into daily practices. Differences in levels of impact knowledge and understanding across partners may also create challenges in achieving a shared approach. In addition, insufficient prioritisation of impact-related learning and capacity building may reduce the effectiveness and sustainability of the toolkit.

(2) Structured Internal Communication Strategy

Implementation

Participants identified the need for clearer internal communication flows, including defined channels, regular strategic meetings, and transparent reporting lines. Developing a structured communication strategy aligned with alliance objectives was considered essential for coordination and shared understanding.

Conditions for success

Institutional commitment, alignment with governance structures, and active involvement of stakeholders at all levels.

Risks

Fragmentation of communication channels, lack of follow-up, insufficient engagement, and resistance to new communication practices.

(3) Data Collection and Monitoring Framework

Implementation

The implementation of this approach involves developing structured methods for collecting and managing data. This includes identifying relevant indicators, establishing clear processes for data collection, and ensuring that collected information is integrated into existing management systems. Participants highlighted the importance of connecting data collection directly to decision-making processes and reporting mechanisms, ensuring that data is not only gathered but actively used to inform strategic actions and improve organisational performance.

Conditions for success

Successful implementation requires access to appropriate technical infrastructure, including reliable systems and tools for collecting, storing, and analysing data. It also depends on having clear and consistent definitions of data requirements and indicators. Strong collaboration between management teams and impact-related functions is essential to ensure that data collection remains relevant, practical, and aligned with organisational goals.

Risks

Potential risks include collecting excessive amounts of data without a clear purpose, which can lead to data overload and make it difficult to identify useful insights. Other challenges include unclear data requirements, limited technical capacity or resources, and situations where collected data is not effectively used to support strategic decisions or organisational learning.

(4) Governance and Role Alignment Tools

Implementation

Tools focusing on clarifying roles, responsibilities, and governance structures were prioritised. This included mapping roles across alliances, establishing clear accountability mechanisms, and integrating impact considerations into governance processes.

Conditions for success

Leadership support, clear mandates, and sustained ownership across partner institutions.

Risks

Ambiguity in roles, limited institutional buy-in, competing priorities, and resistance to increased formalisation.

Overall recommendations

Participants identified several cross-cutting elements essential for successful implementation:

- People & ownership: Dedicated roles, clear responsibilities, and strong engagement across all levels are crucial.
- Simplicity & usability: Tools must be practical, lightweight, and easily adaptable to different alliance contexts.
- Alignment: Strong links between governance, communication, data, and impact are necessary to avoid fragmentation.

- Sustainability: Continuous follow-up, institutional embedding, and adequate resources are required to ensure long-term effectiveness.

Overall, the session emphasised that strengthening management practices is not only a technical exercise, but also a cultural and organisational one, requiring sustained commitment, collaboration, and shared understanding across alliances.

Tools for Challenge 5 – How to Align Project with Alliance-logics?

Throughout Challenge 5, participants demonstrated a clear understanding that project-based and Alliance-based approaches currently coexist, creating inefficiencies across governance and operations. The three tools most frequently identified by participants were:

(1) Role Clarification, Accountability & Impact Manager

The purpose of this tool is to provide a clearer overview of roles and corresponding responsibilities across alliances. It also introduces the role of an *Impact Manager*, supporting the shift from activity-based management towards an impact-oriented approach. This includes:

- Clear roles and responsibilities across the Alliance
- Greater transparency regarding governance and decision-making
- The introduction of an *Impact Manager* role to strengthen the focus on long-term impact rather than short-term activities

Implementation

- Map project vs. alliance roles (role matrix, interfaces). This exercise could also be carried out at the level of FOREU4ALL to gather inspiration from existing role structures across alliances.
- Create transparency (who-is-who, reporting lines, escalation) both within the Alliance and externally.
- Assign named responsibilities (incl. rules for double roles)
- Introduce Impact Manager function
- Define timing, mandates, and governance integration
- Secure funding and nomination process

Conditions for success

For such a framework to be implemented effectively, leadership must provide a clear mandate to a dedicated working group and ensure that agreed roles and responsibilities are embedded at partner level. Ownership of these responsibilities should extend beyond the initial implementation phase and remain integrated within partner institutions over time.

Clear and accessible language is essential to ensure consistent implementation across partners. Definitions and responsibilities should therefore be practical, concise, and easy to apply. In addition, a structured revision and escalation mechanism should be established from the outset to support a shared understanding and address disagreements or uncertainties effectively.

Risks

The current lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities creates implementation gaps that are likely to persist if responsibilities are not clearly defined and documented. Institutions may also have limited incentives to formalise roles and responsibilities, as this can be perceived as increasing institutional exposure or accountability. Combined with insufficient co-creation and consultation, this may weaken ownership of common definitions and reduce commitment to implementation across partners.

(2) Repository for Alliances

A repository for Alliances aims for a central place within FOREU4ALL to collect, access, and continuously expand best practices, creating a knowledge hive for European Universities Alliances for different topics, not only relating to Impact and Project Management.

Implementation

The following steps have been identified for a smooth implementation process:

- Set up **task force** to define needs and scope
- Establish **common structure, standards, and glossary**
- Select and implement **technical platform**
- Populate with **validated, up-to-date content**
- Define **ownership and maintenance processes**

Conditions for success

The group identified clear ownership and active contributions from alliances as essential prerequisites for the repository's success. While an active Community of Practice (CoP) can naturally generate content, this content must also be maintained, disseminated, and integrated digitally to ensure accessibility and usability. Dedicated staff at a centralised level would therefore be necessary to support the platform's

sustainability and ensure quality assurance mechanisms are in place, guaranteeing that documents and contributions meet agreed standards.

Risks

Without adequate maintenance and incentives for contribution, the repository risks:

- Duplicating content already available through existing tools
- Limited accessibility and usability
- Reluctance to share information due to confidentiality concerns

Drawing on experiences from alliance-level and FOREU4ALL topical repositories, participants stressed the importance of sufficient staffing and continuous content management. They also highlighted that repositories should not be maintained indefinitely if usage data demonstrates limited relevance or impact.

(3) From Project to Accreditation & Funding

Another tool identified by the group focused on improving alignment between projects and Alliances through the development of a multi-year accreditation model, potentially supported by an Alliance Label. This proposal addresses one of the root causes of the current divide: the predominance of short-term, project-based funding structures. The aim is to establish a long-term qualitative framework, while recognising that activities themselves may continue to rely on shorter-term funding and reporting cycles.

Implementation

The implementation of a multi-year accreditation model would begin with the creation of a dedicated task force to develop and coordinate the framework, potentially starting with mobility as a pilot area. A needs analysis should then assess existing proposals, activities, funding structures, and implementation conditions across alliances. This process could also be coordinated through FOREU4ALL to support alignment and exchange of practices. To ensure relevance and momentum, the timeline should align with upcoming European calls and policy developments. Based on the findings, several realistic proposal scenarios should be developed, including clear stakeholder roles and timelines for involvement. Finally, a consultation and negotiation phase with key stakeholders would help refine and finalise the accreditation model while ensuring feasibility and broad support.

Conditions for success

The accreditation model should focus strongly on impact and avoid creating the perception of an additional bureaucratic layer. Instead, it should support alliances in establishing a reflective and sustainable long-term framework. Such a significant cultural and structural shift would require broad

support and alignment across alliances. The proposal would therefore need to be flexible, realistic, feasible, and aligned with both European and national frameworks to maximise the likelihood of implementation.

Key success factors include:

- Strong focus on impact rather than bureaucracy.
- Broad alignment and support across alliances
- Clear, realistic, and feasible proposals
- Alignment with EU and national frameworks

Risks

The most immediate risk is rejection by decision-makers and resistance to organisational change. Additional risks include misalignment with highly diverse national systems, which may reduce the feasibility of establishing common regulations across member states. There are also structural and legal uncertainties regarding whether alliances, either as legal entities or consortia, would be eligible to obtain such accreditation.

Key risks include:

- Rejection by the European Commission
- Misalignment with national systems
- Resistance to new working models
- Risk of narrowing the approach to mobility only
- Structural limitations, as alliances are not universities themselves

Overall suggestions

Overarchingly, the groups suggest tackling the duality of projects and alliances from two different angles. Firstly, by implementing tools which help the alliances in a more structural long-term way. Limiting the temporal component (whether this is writing applications, creating legal entities or long-term strategies) require stakeholders to commit resources for a longer period of time, thus allowing for more dreaming rather than ticking the check box. This includes additionally what is stated above, legal entities, long-term strategies, and other sustainability strategies. Secondly, *simple* tools were suggested which allow strengthening the foundation of Alliances internally. Either through common staff members and thus also responsibilities at local partners or through the best practices of other Alliance, thus avoiding time and effort into activities that either work, or not.

10. Workshop on Building a Joint Roadmap

Abstract:

This session focused on the co-creation of a joint roadmap to strengthen alignment between project management and impact within European University Alliances. Participants collaboratively identified and prioritized actions across short-, medium-, and long-term timeframes, reflecting both strategic ambition and operational feasibility. Through structured exchange and joint reflection, the session emphasized viability and sustainability as key criteria for action. The outcomes include a focused set of high-impact measures aimed at supporting lasting structural alignment, enhancing collaboration, and reinforcing the role of project management and impact as joint drivers of transformation.

Facilitators:

- Glória Nunes Rodrigues. Impact Task Force Leader. ENLIGHT Alliance.
- Hannah Worringer. Impact and Quality Officer. ENHANCE Alliance.
- Jonas Salz. Project Coordinator. YUFE Alliance.
- Lily Bethencourt. Project Oversight Manager. EUt+ Alliance.
- Tove Holm. Local Manager at Nord University. SEA-EU Alliance.

Rapporteurs:

- Antonio Román Casas. Project Manager. EU GREEN Alliance.
- Lucia Conte. Project Coordinator. EUTOPIA Alliance.
- Rudy Akueson. General Coordinator. UNINOVIS Alliance.
- Rafael Toledo-Moreo. Deputy Secretary-General. EUt+ Alliance.
- Laura Coló. Project Manager. 4EU+ Alliance.

Short Term (0-12 months)

Across the different parallel sessions, participants highlighted the need to develop practical guiding documents, glossaries, and repositories focused on project management, governance, and impact within European University Alliances. These tools were seen as important first steps towards creating greater clarity, consistency, and shared understanding across Alliances.

Examples of proposed short-term actions included:

- A set of guidelines and recommendations based on this workshop, bringing together the lessons learned, good practices, concerns and proposals emerging.
- Defining roles and responsibilities of staff members within Alliances to improve transparency, coordination, and accountability.

- Developing guideline documents outlining the “minimum requirements” for establishing a robust impact framework at Alliance level.
- Creating common templates, checklists, and practical management tools to support planning, reporting, monitoring, and follow-up processes.
- Establishing shared repositories or knowledge hubs to exchange best practices, methodologies, and examples across alliances.

In addition, participants identified the importance of a structured follow-up process after the Workshop itself. This included ensuring easy access to Workshop materials, presentations, and results, as well as maintaining the momentum of the discussions by continuing collaboration between Alliances and relevant stakeholders. Participants stressed that the proposed tools and frameworks should not remain theoretical outcomes of the workshop but instead be gradually developed and tested through continued cooperation and exchange.

Overall, short-term actions were characterised as highly feasible and relatively easy to implement. They were primarily focused on quick wins and practical improvements that build on work already underway. While many of these actions may appear operational in nature, participants viewed them as essential foundations for the more structural mid-term and long-term developments discussed throughout the workshop.

In the medium term (12-36 months)

Participants emphasised the need to move from initial coordination towards more structured, integrated, and collaborative approaches across Alliances. High-priority operational actions include establishing joint access to tools and shared licenses to avoid duplication and enable the use of common platforms, as well as organising regular online follow-up meetings within each Topical Group (every six to twelve months) to present actions taken, monitor progress, and exchange lessons learned. Strengthening connections across Topical Groups through joint meetings and impact-focused events will further reinforce collaboration, mutual learning, and strategic reflection.

At the strategic level, participants highlighted the importance of developing common approaches to management and impact integration. This includes shared methodologies, aligned processes, and joint frameworks for data, monitoring, and reporting to ensure that decision-making is evidence-based and aligned with impact objectives. Enhanced coordination between Alliance and institutional levels is essential to embed these practices across partner organisations.

Capacity building was identified as a cross-cutting priority to support this transition. Planned actions include joint trainings, workshops, and knowledge-sharing mechanisms, complemented by job shadowing, peer-learning, and mentoring activities. More experienced alliances are expected to act as

reference points and resource hubs, supporting the development of impact literacy, strategic management skills, and effective tool usage across the network.

To ensure implementation and long-term sustainability, participants also underlined the need to prepare a dedicated project proposal that supports the rollout of these recommendations. Together, these actions are considered critical for scaling collaboration, strengthening institutional capacities, and moving beyond fragmented practices towards a more coherent, efficient, and impactful alliance ecosystem.

In the long term (36 months and onwards)

In general, long-term actions were perceived by participants as those most capable of generating lasting structural change within the ecosystem. As in the other categories, one of the high priorities continuing the developed capacity-building opportunities developed in the medium-term, to allow for structured implementation, instead of one-time events, and broader offer, including train-the-trainer approaches. Participants highlighted the importance of embedding *integrated governance and impact management structures* at the strategic level, enabling project management, monitoring, and institutional impact to be addressed coherently and sustained beyond project cycles.

Participants also identified the creation of a dedicated data-analysis group as a high-priority action. Such a group would contribute to the professionalisation and stability of data-analysis roles within Alliances and develop joint recommendations for EACEA. Similarly, another key area concerned the development of shared systems and infrastructures, including collaborative platforms for data, reporting, and knowledge management, as well as interoperable or shared tools at the European level, to facilitate continuous cooperation and reduce administrative complexity. In this context, participants highlighted the importance of building on top of an established relationship with EACEA and relevant stakeholders through policy labs and collaborative processes to improve reporting mechanisms tailored to the realities of the European University Alliances. While the idea of developing a common reporting platform together with EACEA was considered highly transformative, participants also recognised it as having limited feasibility.

Participants emphasised that successful implementation of the roadmap depends on:

- Clear ownership and leadership support, ensuring that actions are anchored in governance structures.
- Continuous coordination and communication, avoiding fragmentation across partners and levels.
- Capacity building and cultural change, recognising that management improvements require shifts in mindset as well as structures.
- Sustainability beyond project cycles, including stable resources and long-term commitment.

Overall, the roadmap provides a structured pathway from immediate improvements in coordination towards long-term integration of management and impact, supporting the transformation of European University Alliances.

11. Conclusions & Closing Session

Chair:

- Antonio Román Casas. Member of the FOREU4ALL Project Management and Impact Topical Groups. EU GREEN ALLIANCE Project Manager.

Rapporteurs Toolbox & Joint Roadmap Workshops:

- Iwona Jablonska. Team Leader – Programme Manager. European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). European Commission.
- Antonin Charret. Research Fellow. University of Oxford.

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/live/pQ8Z-mYPArS?si=hPQIKerwjgZEQifi>

Summary:

The closing session brought together the main lessons of the workshop and framed the two days as a genuine community of practice, built on openness, generosity and peer learning among European University Alliances at different stages of development. The discussions confirmed that, despite their diversity, Alliances share common challenges around project management, impact, professionalisation, sustainability and long-term transformation. They also showed that Alliances are not only implementing projects, but contributing to *“new ways of working, new structures and new ways of cooperation in higher education in Europe.”*

The Toolbox, developed as one of the main outcomes of the second day, identified people as the most important asset of alliances: staff, students and wider university communities already engaged in their work. To turn this potential into impact, alliances need clearer roles and responsibilities, dedicated impact and communication functions, data capacities, trained impact ambassadors, common definitions, impact literacy, storytelling methodologies and shared tools for planning, monitoring and reporting. The need for a common repository of resources and stronger strategic alignment between operational teams, institutional leadership and European-level objectives was also highlighted.

The Roadmap translated the workshop discussions into priorities for future action. It pointed to the need to bring the results back to the topical groups, support the people working on project and impact management in their daily practice, and strengthen capacity-building at institutional, alliance, inter-alliance and policy levels. It also called for a focus on high-value tools rather than fragmented solutions,

and for clearer functions and roles, especially for impact managers, who are expected to work with a long-term perspective while often operating under short-term contracts.

Iwona Jablonska highlighted the structural tension between *“project grant logic”* and *“long-term expectation”*, acknowledging that existing tools are not always fully adapted to the scale and ambition of the European Universities Initiative. She stressed the need to break silos and work in a more synergistic way, since *“policy makers, the sector, everybody needs evidence.”* In this context, she underlined that *“storytelling would be much more powerful if it is supported by evidence”*, linking impact communication to the capacity of alliances to help *“shape the sector in the next years.”*

Antonin Charret complemented this by reconnecting the discussion with the broader policy purpose of the European Universities Initiative. He described professionalisation as the ability to reconcile *“the policy reality, the institutional reality and the project reality,”* and stressed the need to make this policy purpose tangible for university communities and stakeholders. He also warned against reducing impact only to measurable indicators, noting that *“experimentation is part of the DNA of the alliances”* and that *“trust is not just a condition for cooperation; it has also created a desire to work together.”*

Overall, the workshop confirmed that European University Alliances are entering a decisive phase in which project management, impact management and long-term institutional transformation must be addressed together. The Toolbox, Roadmap and closing reflections provide a common basis for continued cooperation, stronger evidence-based storytelling and more strategic dialogue with institutions, Member States and European-level stakeholders. Above all, the workshop reaffirmed that the value of the European Universities Initiative lies not only in what alliances deliver, but in the trust, cooperation and collective change they are building across European higher education.

Outcomes and impact

1. Outcomes

The FOREU4ALL Workshop *Aligning Project Management and Impact* marked an important step in the ongoing maturation of the European Universities Initiative. More than a networking opportunity, the workshop provided a space for project managers, impact managers, policy experts and European Commission representatives to explore how closer alignment between project implementation and impact can strengthen both the delivery and the long-term sustainability of Alliance activities, while identifying practical pathways for future action.

A real community of practice shaping the profession

By creating a collaborative, non-hierarchical working space, participants were able to meet each other in person and to build trust and strengthen professional relationships. A shared understanding emerged that, despite contextual differences, the Alliances face largely similar structural challenges.

It also became evident that the work carried out within Alliances is contributing to the gradual definition of a specific professional practice that goes beyond conventional European project and impact management, with practitioners largely learning by doing in an increasingly collaborative environment. This discussion also brought attention to the evolving nature of these roles, including the lack of long-term stability often associated with them due to the uncertainty of funding cycles. This contributed to a broader reflection on the emergence of a distinct professional field and the growing recognition of its specific characteristics and needs. For example, one immediate outcome of this reflection was the establishment of a Project Managers subgroup within the Spanish “Universidades Españolas en Universidades Europeas” network, a working group that had not been originally foreseen but was created in response to the discussions held during the workshop. Similarly, the growing recognition that impact is a core dimension of Alliance management was reflected in several requests for follow-up training and peer-learning activities, particularly from Alliances such as EELISA and Transform4Europe.

A hands-on toolbox and a roadmap to move forward

A key output of the workshop was the rapid co-design of an operational alignment Toolbox, focused on practical applications rather than conceptual frameworks, with the aim of supporting both intra-Alliance and cross-Alliance implementation.

The creation of the toolbox resulted on a collection of integrated resources adaptable to day-to-day operations, helping with onboarding processes and activity planning. The presentation of Data and Dashboards building on existing methodologies and applications was shared. This did not only propose best practices to other Alliances to use, but also made evident the need to go beyond inter Alliance

reporting requirements towards a more consistent reporting which can support oriented data use and decision making by the EACEA.

To ensure that the workshop outcomes are not treated as a standalone initiative, the community consolidated its findings into a prioritised, multi-level Joint Roadmap intended to inform the ongoing policy work of the European higher education sector. The Roadmap is designed to support continuous integration of the workshop results into existing structures. In the short-term, the outputs will be channelled into the FOREU4ALL Topical Groups, with a view to supporting the development of shared terminology and minimum baseline approaches across Alliances.

In the medium-term, the Roadmap foresees regular bi-annual reviews, the exploration of shared tools and infrastructure (including software licensing models), and the continuation of joint capacity-building activities. These elements are intended to contribute to a more structured and professionalised collaboration across the network.

In the longer term, the Roadmap positions this community as a contributor to emerging policy discussions at European level, including the potential development of joint “policy lab” approaches with DG EAC and EACEA. This would support experimentation with more integrated approach and contribute to ongoing reflection on how project management and impact in Alliances are defined and assessed.

Both Project Management and Impact Topical Groups chairs are already planning the deployment of the roadmap within the respective groups, following up on the outcomes of the workshop and making them actionable.

Project and impact management integrated with policy making needs to shape the field of the Alliances

Bringing together more than 140 participants onsite, the workshop highlighted the strategic potential of integrating project management and impact perspectives, helping to connect day-to-day operational challenges with broader institutional and systemic objectives across the Alliances.

Prior to the workshop, project management and impact assessment within many Alliances often operated in parallel rather than in a fully integrated way, frequently shaped by the constraints of short-term funding cycles. After the gathering, a shift in perspective and working culture has been noticed across many Alliances. Through structured peer exchanges and interactive sessions, participants worked towards a shared understanding of alignment and converged on five guiding principles: (1) ensuring complementarity between project delivery and Alliance strategy; (2) need to embed impact-thinking across all management phases, from strategic planning and implementation to monitoring, reporting, and continuous improvement; (3) establishing clarity of purpose before defining data collection and monitoring approaches; (4) recognising the importance of a longer-term perspective when assessing

impact and transformation; (5) and considering impact as an integral management approach supporting strategic decision-making, organisational learning and long-term Alliance development.

Moreover, direct relational bridges were built or strengthened between operational Alliance staff and external stakeholders, including researchers, Member State representatives, and, above all European Commission/EACEA leadership. At the time of writing this report, the benefits of this are already becoming visible, with EACEA proposing the involvement of the FOREU4ALL Project Management and Impact Management Topical Groups in the development of a Framework for Data Collection in autumn 2026. This would also include engagement with external stakeholders, such as EHESO, with the aim of further supporting the development of the European Universities Initiative in a more coherent and purpose-driven way.

Developing a Common Language for Impact and Alliance Management

In addition to the outcomes already mentioned, a clearer shared vocabulary began to emerge among participants, helping to reduce ambiguity around key concepts. In particular, a more consistent distinction was established between time-bound, KPI-driven project management and longer-term, system-oriented impact and transformation work.

The workshop also contributed to a reframing of how these functions are understood in relation to each other. Rather than treating project management as primarily administrative, performance-oriented and impact as a reporting requirement, participants increasingly recognised both as interconnected elements that jointly support institutional change. Informally, through the meetings of the respective Topical Groups, alliances are increasingly moving towards more integrated ways of working, with stronger and more structured collaboration between project management and impact functions. In particular, there is growing recognition of the value of closer coordination between project managers and impact managers, helping to reduce siloed practices and support more coherent approaches to planning, delivery, and impact assessment across Alliance activities. Three guiding principles were informally but clearly consolidated as a common reference point for future work:

- the need to ensure **alignment between project activities and Alliance-level strategies**,
- the need to embed **impact-thinking throughout the entire management cycle**, from strategy design and implementation, to monitoring and assessment, learning and continuous improvement,
- the importance of defining a clear **purpose before initiating data collection or monitoring processes**,
- the value of allowing sufficient time for **meaningful transformation** processes to unfold.

- The relevance of using **impact assessment as a strategic management tool** that informs decision-making, supports organisational learning, and guides the sustainable development of Alliances.

Finally, there was a shift in perspective regarding external communication. Participants highlighted the importance of moving beyond inward-facing dissemination practices towards **more structured, evidence-informed approaches to communicating the work and impact** of their Alliance to other Alliances to broader audiences and across topical groups. An example of this is the invitation to PM Topical Group to participate in the “European University Alliances Good Impact Assessment Practices” webinar developed by the Impact Group later on 18 May, showing the value literacy growing across the FOREU4ALL groups.

Strengthening Community Building Within and Across Alliances

The workshop has also made a significant contribution to strengthening the sense of community and belonging among participants. The event provided a valuable opportunity for Alliance representatives to connect with peers facing similar challenges, fostering relationships that extended beyond the formal workshop discussions. Participants highlighted the benefits of engaging with colleagues from both their own Alliances and other European University Alliances, creating new channels for collaboration, mutual support, and knowledge exchange. The workshop also reinforced internal dialogue within Alliances by providing participants with new arguments, perspectives, and practical examples to support discussions with colleagues and governance structures. As one participant noted:

“The workshop in Granada was the cherry on top to also make links easier with the project management and to support me in my discussion with my alliance partners when it comes to the relevance of having an impact strategy.”

In addition, the workshop facilitated connections that went beyond the immediate topic of project and impact management. Participants reported initiating exchanges with colleagues from other Alliances on a wide range of strategic and operational issues (e.g., on operationalisation of legal entity). These interactions demonstrate how the community-building dimension of the Workshop can generate broader collaboration opportunities and contribute to the development of stronger inter-Alliance networks.

2. Recommendations

The recommendations presented in this section synthesise the substantive outputs of the Granada Workshop across its multiple sessions: the challenge workshops, the poster session, the raising literacy sessions, the toolbox co-creation sessions, the roadmap workshop, and the closing plenary. They reflect the collective voice of over 140 participants from European University Alliances. These recommendations are intended to be operational. Each is accompanied by a primary target audience and a proposed timeframe. Where a recommendation involves actions at different levels of ambition or resource, two implementation levels are indicated, allowing for partial implementation where needed.

For the European Commission and EACEA

R1 - Adapt reporting frameworks to better capture long-term transformational impact

Current reporting frameworks are primarily structured to capture short-term, measurable, deliverable-based outputs. Across all sessions, participants consistently highlighted that this creates a systematic bias against the types of long-term, relational, cumulative, and institutional changes that Alliances are tasked with generating. The Workshop recommends rethinking and adapting existing frameworks to better capture long-term transformational impact through qualitative assessment mechanisms (narrative, reflective, and evidence-based). This implies as well as a revision on the value of existing performance indicators templates. These review exercises should be developed in genuine dialogue with FOREU4ALL, including its relevant Topical Groups, and other Alliance networks.

Timeframe: Initiate dialogue within 12 months; framework revision within 24 to 36 months

Proposed implementation pathway: Prepare a set of detailed recommendations drawing on the Workshop challenges, toolbox, and roadmap sessions outputs.

R2 - Invest in structural capacities within Alliances and formally recognise Alliance engagement

The over-reliance on temporary, project-funded positions for core coordination, management, and impact functions represents one of the most critical structural vulnerabilities of the European Universities Initiative. Recognition within Erasmus+ funding frameworks of the need for permanent or long-term contract positions should be explicitly considered, not as additional costs, but as conditions for effective implementation by both EC-EACEA and University Alliances. This should be accompanied by the development and dissemination of frameworks for recognising Alliance engagement in academic and administrative career pathways, and the design of explicit incentive mechanisms for key target groups to be agreed upon from the earliest phases of Alliance development.

Timeframe: Advocacy to begin immediately; structural changes within 24 to 48 months

Proposed implementation pathway: Document the professional profiles that emerged from the Workshop and develop a set of recommendations joint position communicated through WP3 Policy Dialogue channels, calling for multi-year staffing options and recognised competency profiles.

Further step: Explore the feasibility of a joint Erasmus+ proposal focused on competency recognition for Alliance project and impact managers and engage Member State representatives as allies in this effort.

R3 - Formalise mechanisms for Alliance practitioners to contribute to policy design and revision

Project managers and impact officers are rarely consulted and involved in policy dialogue. The Workshop calls for formalised mechanisms for structured practitioner input into the design and revision of reporting frameworks, indicators, monitoring processes, and evaluation criteria. Regular collaborative processes should be organised in genuine partnership with FOREU4ALL, creating substantive dialogue between practitioners and decision-makers rather than one-way consultation. FOREU4ALL should be recognised as a legitimate and structured interlocutor on the European Universities Initiative.

Timeframe: First structured dialogue opportunity at autumn

Proposed implementation pathway: Submit the full workshop report and policy recommendations formally to EACEA and DG EAC, accompanied by a focused brief of maximum 4 pages synthesising key structural observations and concrete proposals.

R4 - Provide dedicated support for inter-Alliance learning and collaboration mechanisms

The Workshop demonstrated that structured inter-Alliance learning, peer exchange, and joint capacity development generate significant and transferable value for the sector. The Workshop recommends the creation or strengthening of specific funding opportunities explicitly supporting inter-Alliance collaboration, knowledge exchange, toolbox development, and capacity building. Formal recognition of FOREU4ALL as a structural peer-learning mechanism within the European Universities Initiative by both EC-EACEA and University Alliances, with appropriate and sustainable support for its operations, is also strongly recommended.

Timeframe: Within 24 months

For National Higher Education Authorities and Ministries

R5 - Support the development of national frameworks that recognise and resource European University Alliance professional roles

The instability of project and impact management roles is a structural problem that national authorities are well-placed to address alongside European-level action. Ministries should explore how national higher

education frameworks, funding mechanisms, and employment regulations can better accommodate the specific characteristics of Alliance work, including the integration of Alliance roles into institutional career structures, workload allocation systems, and evaluation frameworks.

Timeframe: Initiate national dialogue within 12 months

Proposed implementation pathway: Engage national Ministry representatives in the WP3 Policy Dialogue process and share the professional profile documentation developed through FOREU4ALL as a basis for national-level discussion.

Further step: Explore whether existing national higher education funding instruments can be adapted to support multi-year staffing of Alliance roles and develop national-level frameworks supporting the integration of Alliance roles into institutional career structures.

R6 - Facilitate national-level knowledge exchange between Alliances and broader higher education stakeholders

National networks can serve as effective vehicles for extending the reach of the FOREU4ALL community. National authorities are well-placed to facilitate and legitimise this kind of exchange, connecting Alliance professionals with national higher education reform processes and ensuring that Alliance experiences inform national policy discussions.

Timeframe: Within 12 months

Proposed implementation pathway: Encourage national higher education networks to create dedicated spaces for Alliance project and impact professionals, support the dissemination of Workshop outputs through national channels, and invite Ministry representatives to contribute to the FOREU4ALL policy dialogue as partners rather than solely as observers.

For European University Alliances, including Alliance leadership and governance bodies

R7 - Champion a culture of strategic alignment between project delivery and Alliance impact

The workshop identified organisational culture as a root cause of misalignment, with project management often perceived as administrative and impact as a reporting obligation. Leadership bodies should actively promote a shared understanding of both functions as strategic drivers of transformation, modelling this framing in internal communications, planning processes, and performance frameworks. This includes using the shared vocabulary developed through FOREU4ALL as a common reference and considering placing senior operational staff on strategic bodies to bridge the gap between strategy, governance and delivery.

Timeframe: Ongoing

Proposed implementation pathway: Co-design an internal alignment assessment drawing on the tools developed during the workshop, use the shared FOREU4ALL vocabulary as a reference for internal communications, and include alignment objectives in the performance frameworks of senior staff.

R8 - Formally recognise Alliance functions in governance structures and commit to stable, long-term resourcing

Alliance rectors and institutional leadership should ensure that engagement in Alliance activities, including project management, impact work, coordination, and inter-institutional collaboration, is formally recognised in staff job descriptions, annual evaluation frameworks, and career development pathways. This should be accompanied by a commitment to stable, long-term institutional resources for Alliance coordination, including permanent or long-term contract positions for key roles. Short-term and uncertain employment contracts for core Alliance staff were repeatedly identified as one of the most significant structural vulnerabilities of the European Universities Initiative, generating discontinuity, expertise loss, and reduced strategic coherence.

Timeframe: Immediately applicable; progressive commitment on resourcing

Proposed implementation pathway: Review current governance structures to identify where project and impact management are absent or underrepresented and establish a standing agenda item on impact and management alignment in governing board meetings.

Further step: Develop an internal business case for multi-year staffing of key project and impact roles, explore institutional co-funding mechanisms that reduce dependency on project-based contracts, and establish professional development pathways that signal long-term institutional commitment.

R9 - Maintain and strategically use regular face-to-face governance meetings at rector and presidential level

Regular face-to-face meetings at rector or president level were identified in the Wall of Successes as a key enabler of strategic alignment, trust-building, and collective decision-making. Alliance rectors should commit to maintaining these moments as a non-negotiable governance practice, and to using them proactively to address strategic questions around sustainability, impact, and long-term transformation.

Timeframe: Ongoing

R10 - Formally embed Alliance engagement in staff job descriptions, workload allocation, and evaluation frameworks

Alliance rectors and institutional leadership should ensure that engagement in Alliance activities is formally recognised in staff job descriptions, annual evaluation frameworks, and career development pathways, covering all roles. The failure to negotiate and agree on incentive and reward mechanisms for key target groups from the kick-off meeting onwards was explicitly identified as a recurring source of difficulty across Alliances.

Timeframe: Immediately applicable for Alliances that have not yet done so.

Proposed implementation pathway: Review existing job descriptions and evaluation frameworks to identify where alliance engagement is absent and introduce formal recognition criteria in the next HR review cycle.

R11 - Embed impact planning systematically from the outset and establish a continuous monitoring mechanism to inform decision-making at different governance levels

Alliances should embed impact thinking from the Alliance ideation phase, projects proposal writing and kick-off. This includes developing, or updating, an impact pathway linking intended impacts with expected outcomes, outputs and activities. “Theory of change” planning tools can be helpful to support the definition of clear and measurable outcome and impact indicators, co-created with potential affected stakeholders and agreed upon by all partners. This also implies establishing shared ownership of impact planning across different governance levels. In the medium term, each Alliance should develop a structured mechanism for continuous, evidence-based impact monitoring and assessment, whether in the form of an ‘Impact Observatory’, an impact dashboard, or an equivalent internal function formally validated at governance level and supported by dedicated staff.

Timeframe: Impact planning immediately applicable; monitoring mechanism design within 24 to 36 months.

Proposed implementation pathway: Develop or update an impact pathway at the start of the next project cycle and define shared outcome and impact indicators in co-creation with potential affected stakeholders and agreed upon by all partners.

Further step: Design and pilot an Impact Observatory or equivalent dashboard mechanism, ensuring it is integrated into regular governance processes and supported by dedicated staff.

R12 - Develop a role matrix and invest in breaking down silos between project management, impact, communication, and EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) functions

Each alliance is recommended to develop a clear, shared, and accessible role matrix documenting responsibilities, decision-making authority, reporting lines, and escalation procedures across all governance and operational levels. Alongside this, Alliances should deliberately invest in building systematic collaboration between project management, impact, communication, and EDI teams. EDI considerations should be embedded throughout the project management cycle and impact assessment practices, including through a designated EDI focal point within project and impact teams and EDI criteria in planning templates, reporting and impact assessment frameworks.

Timeframe: Role matrix within 12 months; cross-functional working progressively over 2 to 3 years.

Proposed implementation pathway: Develop the role matrix and establish regular cross-functional team meetings that bring together project managers, impact officers, communication officers, and EDI leads.

Further step: Develop joint templates embedding communication and EDI considerations into planning documents, reporting and impact assessment frameworks and adapt EDI tools shared during the Workshop to the project management and impact context.

R13 - Reframe data collection as a strategic tool for learning and decision-making

The challenge Alliances face is not the absence of data, but the difficulty of turning data into shared meaning, aligned decisions, and long-term strategic insight. Alliances' data management plans should define what quantitative and qualitative data are collected and for what purpose, who is responsible for collection, analysis, communication and use, and how data feed into both internal decision-making and external reporting. The plans should explicitly identify the purposes of data collection, including its use for project reporting, strategic learning, societal accountability, or decision-making, while ensuring GDPR compliance across institutional contexts.

Timeframe: Within 12 months

Proposed implementation pathway: Map existing data flows against actual needs and dedicate time in governance meetings to reviewing and acting based on quantitative and qualitative evidence.

Further step: Pilot centralised dashboards or integrated systems to make data visible and actionable, and explore shared or interoperable data platforms across Alliances where relevant.

R14 - Recruit and build an Impact Ambassadors network

In alignment with R12, each Alliance is recommended to establish a network of Impact Ambassadors from academic, administrative, and student communities, who are exemplars in Alliance messaging,

storytelling techniques, and impact communication. Impact Ambassadors should receive onboarding covering the Alliance's mission and activities, training in storytelling methodologies, and orientation to available communication tools. Their role and mandate period should be clearly defined and supported by communities of practice, recognition mechanisms, and dedicated coordination spaces.

Timeframe: In alignment with R12, define the Impact Ambassadors role, and launch a pilot within 18 to 24 months; institutionalisation beyond 36 months.

Proposed implementation pathway: Identify and recruit a first cohort of Impact Ambassadors, design a light onboarding programme drawing on the storytelling tools developed during the workshop, and define a clear mandate scope and recognition mechanism before launch.

For FOREU4ALL and Topical Groups

R15 - Formally deploy the Joint Roadmap through both Topical Groups with clear ownership, milestones, and a monitoring mechanism

Both Topical Group chairs have signalled their intention to deploy the roadmap within their respective groups. To ensure this momentum is maintained and the roadmap does not become an archived workshop output, a formal deployment plan should be developed with named owners for each action and realistic timelines. Cross-topical exchanges should also be organised to reinforce collaboration between the Project Management, Impact, Communication and Dissemination, and EDI groups, whose work was shown to be closely interrelated throughout the workshop.

Timeframe: Deployment plan within 9 months; first review checkpoint autumn 2026

Proposed implementation pathway: Dedicate an agenda item in the next meeting of each Topical Group to assign ownership of roadmap actions, set a first review for autumn 2026, and use a simple shared tracking document to monitor progress transparently across both groups.

R16 - Build and launch a shared, curated toolbox and living knowledge repository

FOREU4ALL should consolidate the tools, templates, frameworks, and good practices identified across Alliances into a single, structured, and accessible toolbox. This should be a living resource maintained jointly by the two Topical Groups and updated regularly as Alliances contribute with new experiences. Building on the good practices shared through the Wall of Successes, the poster session, and the toolbox workshops, this repository should serve as a broader knowledge hub. Clear ownership, quality assurance mechanisms, and contribution incentives should be built in from the outset.

Timeframe: First curated version within 12 months; updates on a regular cycle thereafter

Proposed implementation pathway: Use the toolbox outputs and poster materials from Granada as a first version and establish a simple contribution process that allows Alliances to add and update content over time.

Further step: Integrate the repository into existing FOREU4ALL communication channels, build quality assurance mechanisms, and extend scope to serve as a broader knowledge hub covering governance, communication, student engagement, and institutional integration.

R17 - Develop a shared glossary and guideline document on minimum requirements for an Alliance-level impact framework

The absence of shared terminology, covering concepts such as outputs, outcomes, impact, KPIs, performance, transformation, and alliance management, was consistently identified as a major source of misalignment. FOREU4ALL is recommended to develop and endorse a common glossary aligned with EACEA's own terminological framework. Alongside this, FOREU4ALL is recommended to develop a practical guidelines document outlining the minimum requirements for establishing a robust, operational impact framework within a European University Alliance, grounded in concrete Alliance experiences across different stages of maturity.

Timeframe: Glossary first version within 12 months; impact framework guidelines within 24 months

Proposed implementation pathway: Establish a short working group process within the Topical Groups to develop the glossary, with a first draft circulated for peer review before the June 2027.

Further step: Develop the impact framework guidelines document through a multi-Alliance co-creation process, ensuring endorsement by both Topical Groups and grounding in practical examples from Alliances at different maturity levels.

R18 - Design and implement a training, capacity-building, and onboarding framework for Alliance professionals

FOREU4ALL is invited to develop a structured, modular training programme targeting project managers, impact officers, and Alliance staff less familiar with impact. The programme design should be flexible enough to respond to the different targeted groups' needs. The following elements could be considered to be included in the programme: thematic training on impact planning, data collection and analysis, evidence-based reporting, storytelling, and cross-functional coordination; Train the Trainers approaches to support peer learning; and structured mentoring pairing less experienced alliances with more advanced ones. EDI principles should be integrated throughout. This capacity-building offer could be extended to

professionals beyond the current FOREU4ALL initiative. In parallel, FOREU4ALL should develop a comprehensive onboarding kit for incoming Alliance staff.

Timeframe: Onboarding kit within 18 to 24 months; training programme design within 18 months; first delivery within 24 to 30 months.

Proposed implementation pathway: Map existing roles within Alliances that would benefit from capacity-building activities, offer a condensed version of the Granada training sessions to new audiences, and begin developing the onboarding kit drawing on existing toolbox materials.

R19 - Establish structured follow-up exchanges within and across Topical Groups

The momentum generated by the Workshop should be actively sustained through regular, structured online exchanges within each Topical Group. In addition, cross-topical exchanges should be organised to reinforce collaboration between the Project Management, Impact, Communication and Dissemination, and Diversity and Inclusion groups. These exchanges should focus on monitoring progress on agreed actions, sharing emerging good practices, and deepening discussions around specific tools and their implementation.

Timeframe: First follow-up exchange within 3 months of the workshop; then on a regular cycle

Proposed implementation pathway: Structure each exchange around a focused agenda linked to roadmap actions, with a designated rapporteur to capture emerging practices and feed them back into the shared knowledge repository.

R20 - Extend capacity-building and outreach beyond the current FOREU4ALL membership

A concrete signal of demand beyond the existing community emerged from the Workshop itself. Through WP4 – Communication, FOREU4ALL should develop a deliberate outreach strategy to extend capacity-building activities, including joint trainings, job shadowing, peer-learning, and mentoring, to national networks, later-generation Alliances, and professionals not yet connected to the Topical Groups.

Timeframe: Outreach strategy within 12 months; first extended activities within 18 months

Proposed implementation pathway: Map existing national networks and identify entry points for collaboration, offer a condensed version of the Granada training sessions to new audiences, and explore whether more experienced Alliances could take on a formal mentoring or resource hub role within a structured programme.

R21 - Transition toward a shared minimum methodological framework across Alliances

The long-term ambition of FOREU4ALL's work in project management and impact should be to move from a collection of individual tools toward a shared, minimum methodological framework, a coherent, flexible approach ensuring structural alignment between project management, impact assessment, and communication and dissemination functions across European University Alliances. This framework should define a baseline of shared principles, common practices, and interoperable tools that all Alliances can adopt and adapt. Its development should follow a progressive, evidence-based trajectory building on the outputs of the toolbox and roadmap.

Timeframe: Conceptual development within 3 years; progressive implementation within 5 to 10 years.

R22 - Build practical AI capacity across alliances, supported by shared GDPR-compliant protocols

The workshop revealed strong appetite for AI applications in areas such as document synthesis, stakeholder reporting, and action planning, alongside uneven readiness and genuine concerns around data privacy and GDPR compliance. Alliances are currently navigating this territory individually, without shared guidance, leading to duplication of effort and inconsistent practices. FOREU4ALL should facilitate the co-development of practical, GDPR-compliant AI usage protocols that Alliances can adapt to their own contexts, alongside a curated repository of tested use cases.

Timeframe: Within 24 months.

Proposed implementation pathway: Launch a dedicated working session within the Project Management Topical Group, invite alliances with existing institutional AI strategies to share their frameworks, and compile a living repository of tested use cases updated as practices evolve.

R23 - Submit a dedicated project proposal to support implementation of the Roadmap

Multiple sessions converged on the observation that the recommendations and roadmap actions cannot be sustainably implemented without dedicated resources (human and financial) beyond those available to FOREU4ALL's current structure. Therefore, the implementation of most of the above-mentioned recommendations is conditional on FOREU4ALL developing and submitting a targeted project proposal - building on the toolbox and roadmap outputs of this workshop in order to support capacity-building activities, the development of common frameworks and tools, and the strengthening of inter-alliance collaboration mechanisms. The FOREU4ALL proposal should be co-developed with Alliances.

Timeframe: Concept note within 18 months; submission aligned with relevant call calendars

Proposed implementation pathway: Identify a suitable funding call, assemble a core group of Alliances willing to co-develop the proposal, and anchor the application in the concrete outputs and evidence base generated by the Granada workshop.

For Communication and Dissemination

R24 - Publish the full workshop report and develop accessible materials for wider audiences

The complete Workshop report should be published on the FOREU4ALL website and disseminated through all relevant Alliance networks. The publication should be accompanied by a concise executive summary designed for audiences unfamiliar with the technical details of project and impact management. A visually engaging, concise summary of the workshop's main outputs should also be produced for rapid dissemination across social media, institutional websites, and FOREU4ALL channels. A dedicated online dissemination webinar should be organised within 12 months of the workshop, recorded and made publicly available.

Timeframe: Report upon finalisation; visual summary within 1 month of publication; webinar within 12 months of the Workshop.

Proposed implementation pathway: Publish the report and executive summary and organise the post-event webinar to reach Alliance staff who could not attend in person.

Further step: Produce the visual summary and infographic, develop audience-specific pieces including a policy brief for EC/EACEA and a practitioner summary for Alliance staff, and use the storytelling framework developed during the literacy session as a guide for how results are presented.

R25- Submit workshop outputs to EACEA and DG EAC and present at relevant European events

The full Workshop report and policy recommendations should be formally transmitted to EACEA and DG EAC as FOREU4ALL's structured contribution to the ongoing policy dialogue on the European Universities Initiative. When the roadmap is finalised, a one-page visual summary should be submitted as a reference document in the context of the EACEA data collection framework process. The toolbox and roadmap should also be actively presented and discussed at relevant European conferences and events with presentations coordinated across the FOREU4ALL community to ensure consistent messaging and broad geographic reach.

Timeframe: Formal submission coordinated with autumn 2026 policy calendar; conference presentations ongoing from report publication.

R26 - Use the workshop's own storytelling approach to communicate its impact and integrate outputs into Topical Group work programmes

In direct application of the approaches promoted during the Storytelling literacy session, the communication of the workshop's outcomes should go beyond listing outputs. It should articulate the actual changes in understanding, practices, and connections that the Workshop enabled, through testimonials from participants, short case-study narratives from Alliances, and a clear narrative of what the Granada community collectively built over two days. This story should itself be a model for how Alliances communicate their own results. The toolbox, roadmap, and recommendations should also be formally adopted as reference documents by both Topical Groups and integrated into their ongoing work programmes, with regular updates on implementation progress communicated to the wider FOREU4ALL community.

Timeframe: Integrated into all post-event communication from the outset; formal adoption within 1 month of report publication

Concluding remarks

The 2nd FOREU4ALL Workshop “Aligning Project Management and Impact: A Practical and Strategic Dialogue for European University Alliances” represented more than a technical exchange of practices. It marked an important milestone in the evolution of the European Universities Initiative by bringing together, for the first time at this scale, project managers, impact practitioners, Alliance leaders, researchers, policy experts and representatives of European Commission to jointly reflect on how Alliances can better plan, assess, communicate and manage their long-term transformations.

The Workshop demonstrated that European University Alliances have reached a new stage of maturity. While their contexts, focus areas, and governance models differ, participants consistently recognised that they face remarkably similar challenges. This shared understanding created the conditions for genuine peer learning and confirmed the value of developing shared language, common approaches and sharing practical resources while respecting the diversity of Alliance models.

A central outcome of the Workshop was the recognition that project management and impact management should no longer be viewed as separate or sequential functions. Rather, they are complementary dimensions that, when strategically aligned, strengthen planning, implementation, organisational learning, evidence-informed decision-making and long-term transformation. The discussions highlighted the need to embed impact thinking throughout the entire management cycle, moving beyond compliance-driven reporting towards a more meaningful, strategic and transformative approach capable of demonstrating the added value of European University Alliances.

Beyond conceptual reflections, the Workshop generated tangible outputs that will continue to shape future work. The co-created toolbox, the joint roadmap and the resulting recommendations provide practical resources for Alliances while establishing a shared agenda for future collaboration.

The Workshop also confirmed the emergence of a genuine Community of Practice. New professional connections were established within and across Alliances, new professional identities began to be recognised, and participants identified common capacity-building needs that extend beyond individual institutions or Alliances. The requests for follow-up training, the creation of new connections, and the strengthening of collaboration between the Project Management and Impact Topical Groups all demonstrate that the Workshop has already generated lasting effects beyond the event itself.

Finally, the discussions made clear that many of the challenges identified cannot be addressed by Alliances alone. They require continued collaboration between Alliances, FOREU4ALL, the European Commission, EACEA, national authorities and other stakeholders. The recommendations presented in this report therefore constitute not only a reflection on the Granada Workshop, but also a collective call to strengthen the enabling conditions that will allow European University Alliances to fulfil their transformative ambitions.

Ultimately, the Workshop demonstrated that aligning project management and impact is not simply a matter of improving reporting or coordination. It is about building the governance, professional capacities, shared culture and strategic partnerships needed for European University Alliances to maximise their long-term contribution to higher education, research, innovation and society. The momentum created in the Granada Workshop now provides a strong foundation for taking this work forward collectively, through FOREU4ALL and beyond.

Annexes

List of Participating Alliances (in-person)

List of Participating Alliances (in-person)		
4EU+	ENHANCE	IN.TUNE
ACE2EU	ENLIGHT	INGENIUM
Across	EPICUR	INVEST
Arqus	ERUA	KreativEU
ARTEMIS	EU GREEN	NEOLAIa
AURORA	EU-CONEXUS	NeurotechEU
BAUHAUS4EU	EUGLOH	OpenEU
ChallengeEU	EULIST	RUN-EU
CHARM-EU	EUNICE	SEA-EU
CIRCLE U.	EUNICoast	U!REKA
CIVICA	EUniWell	ULYSSEUS
CIVIS	EUnAIR	Una Europa
COLOURS	EUPeace	UNIC
E ³ UDRES ²	EURECA-PRO	UNIGREEN
ECIU	EuroTeQ	UNINOVIS
EDUC	EUt+	UNITA
EELISA	EUTOPIA	Unite!
EMERGE	FORTHEM	UNIVERSEH
ENGAGE.EU	HEROES	YUFE

Programme

Wednesday, 15 April		
• <i>Arrival of participants</i> • <i>17h30: Speakers, facilitators and rapporteurs briefing at Conference Venue (location)</i> • <i>19h30: Welcome cocktail at Patio of the Centro de Lenguas Modernas (location)</i>		
Thursday, 16 April <i>FOCUS: Exploring Challenges & Learnings</i>		
9h00-9h30	Registration	
9h30-9h45	WELCOME SESSION • Pedro Mercado Pacheco. Rector of the University Granada. Arqus Alliance. • Jonas Salz. Chair of the FOREU4ALL Project Management Topical Group. Project Coordinator – YUFE Alliance. • Glória Nunes Rodrigues. Co-chair of the FOREU4ALL Impact Topical Group. Impact Task Force Leader – ENLIGHT Alliance.	Plenary Hybrid
9h45-10h30	KEYNOTE PANEL Why Project Management and Impact Matter for the Future of European Universities? Chair: • Lucie Hunter. Project Manager & Policy Advisor. FOREU4ALL. Panellists: • Caroline Censier-Calmus. Senior Advisor European Universities France. French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. • Jan Palmowski. Secretary-General of The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities. • Antonin Charret. Research Fellow. University of Oxford.	Plenary Hybrid
10h30-11h00	SETTING THE SCENE What is Management and Impact in the European University Alliances context? • Jonas Salz. Chair of the FOREU4ALL Project Management Topical Group. Project Coordinator – YUFE Alliance. • Glória Nunes Rodrigues. Co-chair of the FOREU4ALL Impact Topical Group. Impact Task Force Leader – ENLIGHT Alliance.	Plenary Hybrid
11h00-11h30	COFFEE BREAK. “Wall of Failures”	
11h30-13h00	WORKSHOP on CHALLENGES (1) Challenges in Aligning Project Management and Impact Main Challenges Areas: • Planning for Impact: Impact in EUAs Strategic Planning and Proposal Writing. • Data Collection and Analysis: How to Align and Combine Different Data Collection Processes. • Communication and Societal Accountability: How to Communicate EUAs Performance and Impact.	

	• Management: How you Inform Strategic Decision-Making; How to Maximise/Mitigate Desired/Undesired Effects. • How to Align Project with Alliance-logics? Facilitators & Rapporteurs: Salón de Grados • Facilitator: Audrey Sullivan-Reilly. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Officer. Circle U. Alliance. • Rapporteur: Fernando Galán. Executive Director. EU-CONEXUS Alliance. Room A04 • Facilitator: Angela Kipf. Quality & Impact Manager. EU GREEN Alliance. • Rapporteur: Delfien Cloet. Project Manager. ENLIGHT Alliance. Room A05 • Facilitator: Lily Bethencourt. Project Oversight Manager. EUt+ Alliance. • Rapporteur: Patricia van Hemert. Project Manager. U!REKA Alliance. Room A15 • Facilitator: Morris Villarroel. Associate Vice-Rector. EELISA Alliance. • Rapporteur: Julia Cora. Policy and Funding Advisor. YUFE Alliance. Room A25 • Facilitator: Sannie van Boxtel. Institutional Coordinator. KreativEU Alliance. • Rapporteur: Laura Coló. Project Manager. 4EU+ Alliance.	Salón de Grados A04 A05 A15 A25
13h0– 14h00	LUNCH	
14h00– 15h00	WORKSHOP on CHALLENGES (2) Continuation	Workshop rooms
15h00– 15h30	COFFEE BREAK	
15h30– 16h00	POSTER SESSION	Venue hall
16h00– 17h30	RAISING LITERACY SESSIONS Session 1. Embedding Impact in Everyday Project Management: Approaches to Planning, Evaluating and Managing Alliance outcomes. • Ricardo Scacchetti. Founder & General Director. Impact Track. Session 2. The Power of Storytelling: Reporting and Communicating our Alliance Achievements. • Marina Fernández-Peña. Head of Communications. Arqus European University Alliance. • Armando-Urbe-Echeverria. Chief Communications Officer and Head of Impact and Dissemination Unit.EUTOPIA European University Alliance. • Heather McComb. Digital Communications Manager. UNA EUROPA Alliance. Session 3. How to Make the Most if AI Tools for Effective Project Management and Impact. • Ines Springael. Programme Lead CTL-AI. Breda University of Applied Sciences. • Sannie van Boxtel. Institutional coordinator KreativEU. Breda University of Applied Sciences.	A25 Salón de Grados A15 A04

	Session 4. How to Embed Diversity and Inclusion in Project Management for Impact. Melih Oezkardes & Deirdre McQuillan. Co-chairs of the FOREU4ALL Diversity & Inclusion Topical Group.	
17h30	END of FIRST DAY	
20h00	CONFERENCE DINNER at Las Tomasas Restaurant (location)	
FRIDAY, 17 April <i>FOCUS: BUILDING OUR TOOLBOX AND A JOINT ROADMAP</i>		
9h30-10h00	RESTITUTION of 1st Day – Challenges Chair: Audrey Sullivan-Reilly. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Officer. Circle U. Alliance. Rapporteurs: Fernando Galán. Executive Director. EU-CONEXUS Alliance. Delfien Cloet. Project Manager. ENLIGHT Alliance. Patricia van Hemert. Project Manager. U!REKA Alliance. Julia Cora. Policy and Funding Advisor. YUFE Alliance. Laura Coló. Project Manager. 4EU+ Alliance.	Plenary Hybrid
10h00-11h15	WORKSHOP TOOLBOX (1) Creating a Toolbox: How can we mutually reinforce each other? Tools for Challenge 1- Planning for Impact - Facilitator: Glória Nunes Rodrigues. Impact Task Force Leader. ENLIGHT Alliance. - Rapporteur: Luisa Bernstorff. Director of Operations. Arqus Alliance. Tools for Challenge 2 - Data Collection and Analysis - Facilitator: Hannah Worringer. Impact and Quality Officer. ENHANCE Alliance. - Rapporteur: Helena Jestin. Project Manager. ForTHEM Alliance. Tools for Challenge 3 - Communication and Societal Accountability - Facilitator: Lily Bethencourt. Project Oversight Manager. EUt+ Alliance. - Rapporteur: Sofia D’Aguiar. Executive Director. EELISA Alliance. Tools for Challenge 4 - Management - Facilitator: Tove Holm. Local Manager at Nord University. SEA-EU Alliance. - Rapporteur: Tonia Schmitz. Secretary General. BAUHAUS4EU Alliance. Room A25: Tools for Challenge 5 – How to Align Project with Alliance-logics? - Facilitator: Jonas Salz. Project Coordinator. YUFE Alliance. - Rapporteur: Vanessa Massegg. Coordinator. EURECA-PRO Alliance.	Salón de Grados A04 A05 A15 A25
11h15-11h45	COFFEE BREAK. Wall of Good Practices.	
11h45-13h00	WORKSHOP TOOLBOX (2) Creating a Toolbox: How can we mutually reinforce each other? Continuation	Workshop rooms

13h00-14h00	LUNCH	
14h00-15h30	WORKSHOP ROADMAP Building a Joint Roadmap Room Salón de Grados - Facilitator: Glória Nunes Rodrigues. Impact Task Force Leader. ENLIGHT Alliance. - Rapporteur: Antonio Román Casas. Project Manager. EU GREEN Alliance Room A04 - Facilitator: Hannah Worringer. Impact and Quality Officer. ENHANCE Alliance. - Rapporteur: Lucia Conte. Project Coordinator. EUTOPIA Alliance. Room A05 - Facilitator: Lily Bethencourt. Project Oversight Manager. EUt+ Alliance. - Rapporteur: Rudy Akueson. General Coordinator. UNINOVIS Alliance. Room A15 - Facilitator: Tove Holm. Local Manager at Nord University. SEA-EU Alliance. - Rapporteur: Rafael Toledo-Moreo. Deputy Secretary-General. EUt+ Alliance. Room A25 - Facilitator: Jonas Salz. Project Coordinator. YUFE Alliance. - Rapporteur: Laura Coló. Project Manager. 4EU+ Alliance.	Salón de Grados A04 A05 A15 A25
15h30-15h50	COFFEE BREAK	
15h50-16h30	CONCLUSIONS & CLOSING SESSION Chair: Antonio Román Casas. Member of the FOREUA4ALL Project Management and Impact Topical Groups. EU GREEN ALLIANCE Project Manager. Rapporteurs Toolbox & Joint Roadmap Workshops. Iwona Jablonska. Team Leader - Programme Manager. European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). European Commission. Antonin Charret. Research Fellow. University of Oxford	Plenary Hybrid
16h30	END	