



3rd FOREU4ALL WORKSHOP

From Campuses to Communities

REPORT

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Disclaimer

The content of this report reflects the discussions, views, and preliminary conclusions expressed by participants during the 3rd FOREU4ALL 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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Executive Summary

The third FOREU4ALL workshop, *From Campuses to Communities: Enhancing Engagement and Sense of Belonging in European Universities*, was held on 2-3 June 2026 at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, hosted by the University of Strasbourg and EPICUR Alliance. The event brought together representatives from 58 European University Alliances, with 132 participants attending in person and over 90 joining online, to explore how alliances can move beyond institutional cooperation and become genuine communities for students, academics and professional staff.

The workshop adopted a highly participatory methodology based on keynote discussions, thematic breakout sessions, student-led dialogue, collaborative design activities and prototype development. Participants exchanged practices, identified common challenges and co-created practical solutions to strengthen engagement, inclusion, communication and the sense of belonging across European University Alliances.

Preparation of the workshop

1. Context

Prepared as a joint initiative between the Communication and Dissemination and Community Engagement Topical Groups, the 3rd FOREU4ALL Workshop, titled "From Campuses to Communities: Enhancing Engagement and Sense of Belonging in European Universities," addressed a critical priority mandated by the European Commission: recognizing that a profound sense of belonging and active engagement are foundational to maximizing the impact of European University alliances. This workshop served as a unique platform to bridge alliances' actions with an impactful effect on their communities. The workshop aimed to allow alliances' communicators and community makers to access and engage with ideas, concepts and actions that will help them to deliver tangible, long-term value to their universities' communities.

2. Objectives

The workshop was designed to co-create innovative actions and strategies for engaging students, academics, and administrative staff across European University alliances. This workshop leveraged the collective expertise of diverse Topical Groups (Communication and Dissemination, Community Engagement, Mobility, Diversity and Inclusion, and Multilingualism and Multiculturalism) to enhance inclusiveness, engagement, and long-term sustainability within the universities' communities. The workshop provided a collaborative platform to exchange best practices for participatory communication that fosters a strong sense of belonging, while exploring user-centred, accessible actions tailored to participants' varying institutional contexts. Furthermore, the joint initiative aimed to dismantling persistent barriers to international mobility, particularly for underrepresented, disadvantaged, or disabled participants. Ultimately, by strengthening collaboration between all alliances' communicators and community engagement professionals, the workshop aimed to cultivate a shared vision on how they can drive transformative impact.

3. Practical information

2-3 June 2026, European Parliament, Strasbourg, France.

# Registrations	140
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# Registered alliances	63
# Attendees	132
# Participating alliances	58
# External speakers*	9

The anonymized list of registrations can be found in Annex 1.

***Profile of the 9th external speakers**

KEYNOTE PANEL - Why Sense of belonging Matters: Lessons from European University Alliances

- Francesco Girotti PhD, Head of the Una Europa Unit at University of Bologna
- Danielle Taylor PhD, Associate Professor, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne
- Lily Bethencourt, EUT+, Project Oversight Manager
- Eddie Arriaga Flores, ECIU, Co-Chair of FOREU4ALL Topical Group Student-led community on Sustainable and Democratic Student Participation

Student roundtable

- Eddie Arriaga Flores, ECIU, Co-Chair of FOREU4ALL Topical Group Student-led community on Sustainable and Democratic Student Participation
- Anette-Mai Pirk Birk, CIVIS, Student representative
- Gaida Lefeuvre Mendoza, EUniWell, Chief Student Officer
- Thomas Kowalewski, EC2U, Member of the Student Council
- Sarah Fuhrich, representative of EUC Voices project
- Dominika Guzik, representative of ESN International

Programme

The programme can be found in Annex 2.

Workshop sessions

1. Welcome session

The session began with opening remarks from the workshop's organizing chairs: **Giovanni Andriolo and Barbara Guyomarch (Co-Chairs of the Community Engagement Topical Group) alongside Blanca Burillo Lago (Chair of the Communication and Dissemination Topical Group).**

The chairs challenged participants to look beyond rigid institutional cooperation and focus on the human, cultural, and organizational layers required to foster a true "sense of belonging" across the 65 existing European University Alliances. Over the course of the 48-hour workshop, attendees from various specialties (e.g., Communication, Community and student engagements, Diversity and inclusion, Mobility) will collaborate to transform abstract ideas into tangible prototypes designed to enhance student and staff engagement. Engaging with alliances directly translates the EU motto "United in Diversity" from an abstract concept into a daily workspace reality. This unique, cross-border interaction has a profound "Europeanizing" effect, helping participants develop a deeper connection to shared European citizenship and values.

Representing the host, **University of Strasbourg**, and the **EPICUR Alliance**, **Professor Birte Wassenberg** provided the academic framework for why alliances are vital to the future of higher education. Alliances are meant to deepen European Integration, as they are something far more profound than traditional Erasmus exchanges. They are designed to build *de facto* solidarity by weaving permanent structural links between people. Amid rising Euroscepticism and democratic backsliding, the groundwork done within universities is essential for the stabilization of European integration. Alliances are a vehicle for European shared values and should actively champion the fundamental values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Sharing her own experience launching a triple master's degree, Prof. Wassenberg noted that it took two years of intense negotiation to navigate varying national administrative systems, university calendars, and grading rules. She advocated for a "step-by-step" approach, stressing that building an intercultural community takes long-term effort and cannot be rushed.

Madame Laurence Farreng (MEP) delivered a video highlighting the legislative challenges facing the initiative in the upcoming EU budget cycle (2028–2034). She pointed out a critical bottleneck: a massive majority of students and staff remain entirely unaware that their home

universities are part of an alliance. Closing this communication gap and making alliances accessible to the wider student body is paramount. While MEP Laurence Farreng supports keeping the alliances under the Erasmus+ umbrella as a "laboratory" for higher education, she raised serious concerns regarding the European Commission's current budget proposal, citing a total lack of explicit financial breakdowns. She pledged to fight in the European Parliament to secure clear, multi-stream funding for alliances across Erasmus+, Horizon Europe (Research), the Competitiveness Fund, and regional development funds (ERDF).



Photo credit: EPICUR Alliance

The plenary concluded with the introduction of the keynote panel. This panel discussion is set to tackle how to navigate geopolitical tensions and cross-border collaboration to foster an authentic community in uncertain times.

2. Keynote Panel: "Why sense of belonging matters: Lessons from European University Alliances"

Moderator: Andrea Zestic. Chief Communications Officer. ENHANCE Alliance.

Panellists:

- Dr. Danielle Taylor. Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.
- Dr. Francesco Girotti. Una Europa Alliance. University of Bologna.
- Lily Bethencourt. EUt+ Alliance.
- Eddie Arriaga Flores. ECIU Alliance.

Opening

The session was opened by Andrea Zestic, Chief Communications Officer of the ENHANCE Alliance, who set the tone for the panel with a framing that would anchor the full 60 minutes: *"There is a difference between being part of an alliance — enrolled, listed, showing up — and feeling part of something. A community. A shared project. A sense of "We"."*

To open both the session and a live audience poll, in-person and online participants were invited to respond via Mentimeter to the question: *'The community you are building — how does belonging feel in it right now? Three words.'*

The resulting word cloud, generated in real time, surfaced three dominant themes that framed the panel discussion:

- **Energy and shared purpose** - the driving force needed to keep diverse groups aligned over time;
- **Co-creation and interculturality** - moving beyond administrative frameworks to collaborate actively across cultural backgrounds;
- **Embracing the unknown** - a collective willingness to step into uncharted academic and structural territory together.

Research Insights on the Complexities of Belonging

Dr. Danielle Taylor, Associate Professor, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

Drawing on comparative research involving more than 175 participants across two European University Alliances, Dr. Danielle Taylor presented findings that challenged simple definitions of belonging. Key insights included:

- **Belonging is not universal:** it manifests differently depending on an alliance's culture. In one alliance studied, it centred on personal and professional development; in another, on collaboration and shared European values.
- **Alliances function as complex meta-organisations.** Cultivating an authentic sense of safety and being seen requires recognising and adapting to the distinct values motivating each network.
- **What works in one alliance context cannot simply be transplanted into another.** Belonging must be grown from within the specific culture of each community.

Structural Evolution and Breaking Silos

Dr. Francesco Girotti, Senior Local Lead Una Europa, University of Bologna

Dr. Francesco Girotti drew on institutional experience at the University of Bologna and Una Europa to examine how the structural positioning of alliance units within universities shapes community and belonging:

- A growing trend sees dedicated alliance core units moving out of traditional international offices and relocating directly under university General Directorates — enabling collaboration across HR, teaching, and learning at all administrative levels.
- However, these core units risk becoming new administrative silos. The University of Bologna counters this through regular cross-departmental alignment workshops and transparent strategic storytelling to keep staff who dedicate only 5–10% of their time to alliance work connected to the broader purpose.
- Una Europa's evolution, from a visionary top-down launch to an intentionally bottom-up second phase built on academic action plans, demonstrated that both directions are essential and require constant, active communication channels.

Low-Threshold Initiatives as Catalysts for Belonging

Lily Bethencourt, Project Oversight Manager, EUT+

Lily Bethencourt illustrated how operational decisions with seemingly modest ambitions can generate organic belonging at scale:

- EUT+ introduced a joint affiliation system enabling researchers to sign academic papers under both their home institution and the European University of Technology Alliance (EUT+). Originally targeting 100 co-affiliated papers by 2027, the initiative went viral organically, producing over 334 papers within a single year.
- This visual consolidation provided immediate European-level recognition and catalysed new research collaborations that would not otherwise have formed.
- A unified brand identity pushed across campuses generated grassroots curiosity, prompting staff and students to actively engage with and question their alliance's purpose — belonging built not through mandate, but through visibility.

Student Perspectives: Structural Barriers and the Democratisation Gap

Eddie Arriaga Flores, Co-Chair, Student-led Community Task Group, ECIU / Hamburg University of Technology

Eddie Arriaga Flores offered direct feedback on the structural obstacles that prevent belonging from reaching the majority of students:

- Alliance learning opportunities are still communicated in formats that feel inaccessible to the average student — institutional language excludes rather than invites.
- Many early alliance programmes were built rapidly without genuine co-creation with students, resulting in structures that do not reflect student needs or realities.
- Participation remains skewed toward privileged demographics. Current Erasmus+ financial models require students to travel out-of-pocket and wait months for reimbursement — a structural barrier that effectively bars lower-income students from participation.
- Without equitable funding and inclusive structural design, the majority of students will not engage, regardless of the quality of the community being built.

Key Conclusions

The panel surfaced a set of shared tensions and priorities that carried directly into the breakout workshop sessions:

- **Belonging cannot be mandated or measured in isolation.** It must be grown from within each alliance's specific culture, through structures that are responsive rather than prescriptive.
- **The gap between institutional design and lived experience remains the central challenge.** Low-threshold, mutually beneficial initiatives — such as joint research affiliations — prove more effective at generating organic belonging than top-down programmes.
- **A significant democratisation gap persists.** Sustainable community-building requires shifting from short-term project logic toward long-term funding models that prioritise inclusion over administrative deliverables.
- **Alliances must move from institutional jargon to accessible storytelling, and from consulting students to genuinely co-creating with them.**



Photo credit: EPICUR Alliance

3. Parallel breakout sessions

Each parallel session has 2 facilitators who present inspiring cases from their own alliance and brings the whole group to brainstorm and create innovative ideas to improve communication and community building in alliances. The facilitators were selected through an open call launched ahead of the event; the successful applicants are members of the FOREU4ALL community and represent several different Topical Groups.



Photo credit: EPICUR Alliance

Workshop 1: “How to reinforce the sense of belonging: values, interpersonal relations and Europe.”

- Elena Trencheva, FilmEU, National Academy for Theater and Film Arts
- Zorica Grubor, COLOURS, University of Kristianstad

The details of the ideas from Workshop 1 can be found in Annex 3.1.

Workshop 2: “How do we improve awareness? Strengthening local visibility and understanding the strategic value of European University Alliances.”

- Bibiana Bonmatí, CHARM-EU, University of Barcelona
- Blanca Burillo Lago, CHARM-EU, University of Barcelona

The details of the ideas from Workshop 2 can be found in Annex 3.2.

Workshop 3: “How can we overcome mobility barriers, fostering inclusion and diversity in European University Alliances?”

- Benedetta Gennaro, Unite!, Technical University of Darmstadt
- Cindy Vallée, UNIGreen, Haute Ecole de la Province de Liège

The details of the ideas from Workshop 3 can be found in Annex 3.3.

Workshop 4: “How to improve motivation through recognition? Celebrating contributions across European University Alliances.”

- Yachu Yang, 4EU+, University of Geneva
- Koen van Damme, U!REKA, HOGENT UAS & Arts

The details of the ideas from Workshop 4 can be found in Annex 3.4.

Workshop 5: “What’s in it for you? Understanding the value of European University Alliances”.

- Nicolas De Keyser, CHARM-EU, Ruhr West University of Applied Sciences
- Amandine Fleurier, UNITA, Université Savoie Mont Blanc

The details of the ideas from Workshop 5 can be found in Annex 3.5.



Photo credit: EPICUR Alliance

4. Poster session

Fifteen posters were showcased in the hall.

- **Aurora:** Student Ambassadors
- **4EU+:** Co-creation in action: empowering students to shape the alliance experience
- **ACROSS:** Relational skills for transnational community engagement, communication and dissemination
- **UnaEuropa:** Anchoring milestones in meaning
- **UniGreen:** UniGreen Festival: at the heart of democratic student participation
- **UNITA:** UNITA Community Building
- **YUFE & EUTOPIA:** Bridging Borders, Building Belonging
- **NEOLAIa:** Connecting Communities-Strengthening Engagement and Impact in NEOLAIa Alliance
- **Transform4Europe:** T4E Green Campus Life, Inclusion and Wellbeing
- **EU-CONEXUS:** From A student to EU-CONEXUS student: methodology to define and shape a shared student identity
- **EU-CONEXUS:** Building belonging through co-creation: EU-CONEXUS pathways from schools to stakeholder communities
- **EuroTeQ:** Enhancing educator engagement
- **EPICUR:** The EPICUR Centre for International Teaching and Learning
- **BAUHAUS4EU:** Students and staff together: securing meaningful community engagement
- **EC2U:** The EC2U Ambassador Programme

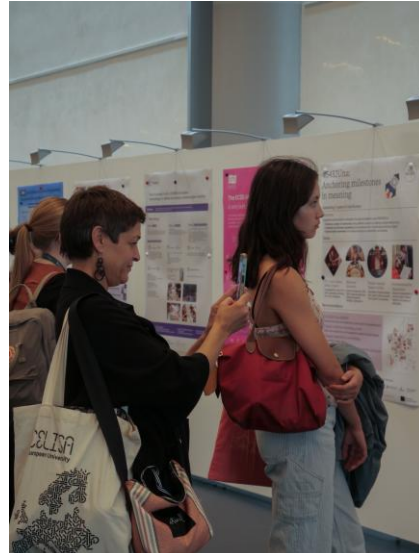


Photo credit: EPICUR Alliance

You can check all the posters in **Annex 4**.

5. Plenary session: Cross-Track Synthesis

Andrew Bennet (Co-chair of the Communication and Dissemination Topical Group), moderator of this session, explained that the purpose of this synthesis session is to review and pitch 15 distinct grassroots ideas developed during earlier breakout sessions. While the current day focuses on generating these concepts, the following day features a two-hour implementation slot dedicated to turning the selected ideas into actionable frameworks for students, staff, and faculty.

Idea 1 - Accreditation & Motivation Loop: Addresses student time constraints and the need for formal recognition. Proposes a digital accreditation framework (e.g., additional credits or open badges) to incentivize alliance participation and build intrinsic motivation.

Idea 2 – Fast Tracks: Bridges the gap between student feedback and slow bureaucratic responses. Proposes a platform (like Miro) featuring dedicated student ambassadors who aggregate ideas, deliver them to the student council/board, and keep participants actively involved in the follow-up.

Idea 3 - Diversity & Inclusion Charter: Focuses on structurally inclusive mobility, specifically for students and staff with disabilities or mental health needs. Proposes a governing charter that

establishes minimum service and facility standards across varying national and funding regulations.

Idea 4 - "Make Voices Count": Focuses on systemic democracy and reducing participant frustration. Advocates for a mandatory accountability loop where every piece of community feedback receives a transparent answer—even if the request cannot be implemented due to structural constraints.

Idea 4 - "Search, Share, Create": A back-to-basics community greenhouse approach. Focuses on creating immediate digital and physical spaces to connect people, cultivate organic engagement, and build a sense of belonging.

Idea 5 - Alliance Festival Day: A scalable, recurring milestone built into the academic calendar. Highlights alliance culture simultaneously across all partner campuses using local, customizable activities (e.g., mini-Olympics, food trucks, movie clubs, or step challenges).

Idea 6 – This is ~~not~~ for me!: A communication and target-driven campaign designed to engage "non-typical" students and staff at the start of the academic year. Includes student testimonials from diverse backgrounds and targets for first-time participants to avoid an elitist echo chamber.

Idea 7 - Today Elsewhere: Real-time cultural cross-promotion. Each university selects one local event per year (e.g., King's Day in the Netherlands) to broadcast across all partner campuses via digital screens, social media, or themed workshops.

Idea 8 - Home Away from Home: An international art competition slated for International Students' Day (November 17). Features local exhibitions that transition to an alliance-wide final, building a shared European identity through visual storytelling.

Idea 9 - The Big Bang BIP: A rotating Blended Intensive Program (BIP) anchored to local cultural events. Co-created by students, professors, and city stakeholders, it provides a highly scalable, grant-supported framework for cross-border collaboration.

Idea 10 - The Lounge: A co-created, safe, and authentic digital community forum mirrored by identical physical spaces across all alliance campuses. Offers low-threshold access for multi-stakeholder connections.

Idea 11 - End-to-End Student Onboarding Program: Strengthens peer-to-peer support during the fragile pre-departure and post-return phases of mobility. Pairs prospective students with returning alumni to optimize administrative navigation and skills leverage.

Idea 12 - Institutional Alignment: Advocates for better institutional coordination to reduce parallel administrative structures. By actively integrating staff, they become organic advocates who actively promote alliance benefits to the student body.

Idea 13 - Rector & President Engagement Workshops: Addresses leadership disengagement through targeted in-person workshops delivered via FOREU4ALL. Features direct face-to-face policy tracking, management training, and data-driven best practices to secure administrative buy-in.

Idea 14 - Low-Threshold Seed Funding: Complements massive, slow-moving joint research programs with fast-acting local seed funds. Equips student representatives and campus ambassadors with the immediate tools needed to foster grassroots integration.

Idea 15 - Joint Researcher Database: Eliminates the labor-intensive reliance on personal connections for early-career researchers, PhD students, and postdocs. Proposes a centralized IT database to connect like-minded colleagues across partner institutions.

Idea 16 - Transversal Blended Staff Weeks: A sustainable, blended mobility framework (physical and virtual) for administrative and technical staff. Focuses on sharing best practices for universal university challenges like digital transformation and student services.



Photo credit: EPICUR Alliance

6. Roundtable: “Hearing the Students’ Voice”

The Student Roundtable brought together student representatives, alliance staff, and external stakeholders to discuss how European University Alliances can strengthen student engagement and foster a stronger sense of belonging.

A key message was the importance of **peer-to-peer communication**; Students trust and engage more with testimonies from fellow students who have experienced alliance opportunities than with institutional communication alone. Participants also stressed that meaningful engagement depends on **student ownership**, with active involvement in decision-making, ambassador programmes, and working groups increasing motivation and commitment.

The discussion highlighted that mobility experiences, international events, and collaborative activities help students build lasting networks and develop a stronger European identity. However, participation is often limited by low awareness, unclear information, financial constraints, academic workload, and insufficient recognition of voluntary engagement.

To address these barriers, panellists recommended clearer communication, stronger involvement of academic staff and student ambassadors, better information on funding opportunities, and wider recognition of student participation through tools such as micro-credentials, badges, or ECTS.

Overall, the roundtable concluded that European University Alliances create value not only through educational opportunities but also by building inclusive communities, encouraging active citizenship, and strengthening a shared European sense of belonging.



Photo credit: EPICUR Alliance

7. Plenary session: wrap-up of day 1

Following the 1st day's brainstorming and Mentimeter voting session, **12 winning pitches** were selected to be developed further. These 12 initiatives are categorized by their target audience:

- **Students Only:** *Home Away from Home, End to End, Fast Tracks, and It's Not for Me.*

- **Staff Only:** *Rector's Workshop, Joint Researcher Database, and Transversal and Blended Staff Weeks.*
- **Both Audiences (Mixed):** *Festive Alliance, Coffee for All, Today Elsewhere, Big Bang BIP, and Kameleon Bus.*

Participants were given three hours to transform the selected ideas into concrete working prototypes (developing the needed resources, the steps to carry out the actions, resources, etc.). While attendees were encouraged to stick to the groups they worked with the previous day, they were permitted to switch to a different idea if they preferred. To ensure effective collaboration, the organizers aimed for a balanced distribution of **roughly 10 people per pitch idea**, noting they would manually adjust groups if any single room became overcrowded.

8. Parallel breakout sessions

Students Only (Yellow Room / Breakout 3.1): Facilitated by Giovanni Andriolo

- PROTOTYPE 1: [End to End Student Onboarding](#)
- PROTOTYPE 2: [Fast tracks](#)
- PROTOTYPE 3: [Today Elsewhere](#)
- PROTOTYPE 4: [This is ~~not~~ for me](#)
- PROTOTYPE 5: [Home away from home](#)

Staff Only (Green Room / Breakout 3.3): Facilitated by Barbara Guyomarch

- PROTOTYPE 6: [More than a staff week!](#)
- PROTOTYPE 7: [Research collaboration hub](#)
- PROTOTYPE 8: [Rectors' workshop](#)

Both Audiences (Plenary Room): Facilitated by Andrea Zestic.

- PROTOTYPE 9: [Festivalliance](#)
- PROTOTYPE 10: [CoffeeForAll](#)
- PROTOTYPE 11: [The Cameleon Bus](#)
- PROTOTYPE 12: **Big Bang BIP**

9. Plenary: Prototypes presentation and wrap-up of the Workshop

Blanca Burillo Lago (Chair of the Communication and Dissemination Topical Group) and Giovanni Andriolo (Co-Chair of the Community Engagement Topical group) presented the 12 prototypes by introducing their leaders to present each idea.

Prototypes targeting students

End-to-End Onboarding Program

- **The Challenge:** Prospective mobile students experience immense pre-departure anxiety regarding funding, housing, credit recognition, and potential loneliness abroad.
- **The Prototype Solution:** A fully co-created space where returning mobile students, local student boards, and administrative/academic staff jointly facilitate peer-to-peer support.
- **Mechanism & Impact:** Returning students are trained to become mentors, offering real-world tips and knowledge tools. This empowers incoming students to feel a sense of European unity, enjoy a high-quality experience, and ultimately return home inclined to become mentors themselves, sustaining the cycle.

Fast Tracks

- **The Challenge:** Students possess valuable insights to improve their campuses but suffer from systemic "feedback fatigue," feeling that their voices are lost in a bureaucratic maze because they do not know how to efficiently access their student councils.
- **The Prototype Solution:** A highly structured, dedicated feedback platform heavily promoted during introduction days and peer mentoring events via QR codes and social media.
- **System Mechanism:** Students submit ideas to specific topical boxes and select whether they want to be "anonymous" or "non-anonymous." Non-anonymous entries actively hook the student into the follow-up process. Student ambassadors screen the

submissions, bundle overlapping ideas, and route them directly to the appropriate administrative unit.

Today Elsewhere

- **The Challenge:** Alliances remain invisible on a day-to-day campus level because cross-border integration rarely translates into a felt, real-time experience for the broader student body.
- **The Prototype Solution:** A highly scalable model where each university "owns" and showcases one of its unique, signature local cultural events across the entire alliance network.
- **System Mechanism:** The host institution creates a turn-key "communication kit" containing ready-to-use posters, visual assets, and local student testimonials. Partner campuses use these kits to host parallel on-site or hybrid activities (e.g., wearing orange on campus to celebrate the Netherlands' King's Day).
- **Impact:** Every event is documented to produce an annual retrospective video compilation called "A Year Elsewhere," designed to welcome incoming freshmen and demonstrate the alliance's vibrant footprint to external stakeholders like the European Parliament.

This is ~~not~~ for me

- **The Challenge:** Information overload creates severe communication fatigue. The average student assumes alliance opportunities are reserved exclusively for an academic "elite" who can afford long-term, 6-to-12-month mobilities.
- **The Prototype Solution:** A targeted, localized communication umbrella campaign that deliberately answers the student's questions before they are even asked. It shifts the burden of seeking information away from the student.
- **System Mechanism:** Organizers actively meet students in their daily environments—deploying digital screens by campus coffee machines, engaging student associations, and utilizing professors as direct informational conduits. Central alliance offers are

systematically disassembled into "building blocks" and precisely mapped to relevant study fields (e.g., routing a communication summer school directly to communication diploma classes).

Home Away from Home

- **The Challenge:** International and incoming domestic students frequently arrive at their new campuses feeling isolated and disconnected from their immediate surroundings, remaining entirely unaware of the opportunities provided by their university alliance.
- **The Prototype Solution:** An annual, decentralized art competition held simultaneously across all partner universities on International Students' Day (November 17). Students express what "belonging" means to them through painting, photography, or digital art.
- **Sustainability & Impact:** Local campus exhibitions organically engage local municipalities and communities. Local winning entries advance to a high-visibility, alliance-wide final exhibition, transforming personal stories into a unified European narrative.

Prototypes targeting Faculty & Staff

More than a staff week

- **The Challenge:** Administrative and technical university staff are generally left out of the loop regarding alliance benefits, showing low motivation to participate in mobility programs due to a lack of professional engagement.
- **The Prototype Solution:** "Powering Up More than a Staff Week"—a strategic, challenge-based annual program that shifts the traditional 3-to-5-day staff week into a continuous professional network.
- **System Mechanism:** It begins by selecting a specific strategic cohort (e.g., librarians and IT staff collaborating on "Open Science"). Following virtual warm-up sessions, cohorts attend a rotating 3-day in-person staff week (e.g., Montpellier in 2026, Barcelona in 2027) to solve real-world daily workflow problems.

- **Sustainability:** Post-mobility; the cohort meets via mandatory monthly online meetings. Participants return to their home campuses as active alliance ambassadors, ensuring long-term knowledge dissemination.

Joint Research Database

- **The Challenge:** While inter-alliance collaboration yields high funding success rates, actual engagement is severely stifled because existing digital connection hubs face low awareness, steep maintenance burdens, and persistent platform inactivity.
- **The Prototype Solution:** A comprehensive research collaboration hub established at the alliance level. Rather than building a new tool from scratch, the team outlined a clear roadmap to benchmark existing frameworks (such as the Agora platform) and compile cross-alliance best practices.
- **Implementation Steps:** The group designed a time-bound roadmap that culminates in a cross-alliance Hackathon organized as a BIP. This hackathon brings IT developers, mobility staff, and researchers together to co-design a unified database foundation.

Rector's Workshop

- **The Challenge:** Executive university leadership (rectors and presidents) frequently disengages from alliance initiatives because institutional resources are strictly prioritized based on high-level political relevance and competitive prestige.
- **The Prototype Solution:** The creation of an elite, executive forum described as the "Davos for Rectors." This highly prestigious meeting place is designed to be formally integrated into future FOREU4ALL policy proposals.
- **System Mechanism:** Backed by rigorous stakeholder analysis to ensure maximum peer-network draw, the forum features high-level European Commission members as keynote speakers. The programming positions cross-border alliances as the absolute future of European higher education, securing executive commitment to long-term institutional transformation.

Prototypes targeting Students, Faculty & Staff

Festival Alliance

- **The Challenge:** University networks lack a singular, synchronized bottom-up tradition capable of breaking down institutional borders and celebrating core European values in a universally understood language.
- **The Prototype Solution:** A synchronized, decentralized one-day global festival celebrated simultaneously across all partner universities worldwide. The event leverages the universal languages of food, art, film, sports, and music.
- **System Mechanism:** Using a decentralized toolkit, each campus coordinates with a central project manager to select activities that match their local capacity (e.g., pop quizzes, international karaoke, food trucks, or short-film screenings). The roadmap allows campuses to start by executing just one stellar shared activity on Day One and scaling up exposure in subsequent annual editions.

Coffee EU for All Toolkit

- **The Challenge:** University campuses suffer from siloed environments with zero connection between students and staff, an invisibility of alliances, and "artificial belonging" due to highly occasional, low-impact interactions.
- **The Prototype Solution:** A physical, shared, and welcoming campus space centered around high-quality coffee (and trending alternatives like matcha powder) to foster organic community building.
- **Mechanism & Impact:** The space integrates comfortable seating, phone charging stations, language coffees, open staff-student roundtables, and digital displays showcasing alliance opportunities. It can exist as a permanent campus hub, a pop-up station, or a mobile cargo bike to accommodate multi-address urban campuses.

Kameleon Bus / Van

- **The Challenge:** Despite an abundance of digital alliance opportunities, actual student engagement remains low because passive digital promotions are easily overlooked in crowded online algorithms.
- **The Prototype Solution:** A physical, highly visible "load of opportunities on wheels" (starting as a local van, with the potential to upgrade to a bus).
- **Mechanism & Impact:** The project kickstarts with a multi-alliance international expo featuring rented vans/buses with drivers, which are later deployed at the local level. Owned by the universities but run by students for students, the van travels directly to student hotspots to facilitate socializing, networking, and information sharing in a natural, impossible-to-ignore way.

Big Bang BIP (Blended Intensive Program)

- **The Challenge:** Prospective participants face acute confidence gaps, a lack of awareness regarding alliance complexities, and substantial mental or physical barriers to joining international communities, making active engagement feel like an exclusive privilege.
- **The Prototype Solution:** A customized "Kickstarter BIP" acting as an intentional gateway. It starts with structured online co-creation meetings where students, staff, and academics collaboratively tailor the subsequent physical mobility to their actual upskilling needs.
- **Sustainability & Impact:** To prevent it from becoming a disconnected, one-off event, the prototype builds continuous momentum by launching an integrated alumni network. Former participants return in subsequent editions to provide peer-to-peer mentoring and continuity.

You can find the details of all prototypes in **Annex 4**.



Photo credit: EPICUR Alliance

Platform Publishing & Next Steps

Paula Talero, FOREU4ALL Communication Manager, confirmed the digital roadmap for the co-created proposals. All 12 prototype proposals will be published on the FOREU4All website under the Achievements and Impact section. They will also be directly linked to the dedicated web pages of the relevant Topical Groups (specifically Communication and Dissemination and Engagement and Community Engagement) to ensure easy cross-alliance uptake.

Platform Publishing & Next Steps

Allison Garnier Rivers (EPICUR Alliance Manager & FOREU4ALL Work Package 2 Co-Lead) delivered strategic closing remarks highlighting the immense scale of the event: over 120 on-site attendees in Strasbourg and 50+ online participants representing 58 distinct European universities alliances. She contextualized the importance of this community engagement work against high-level European policy timelines: Recent meetings under the Cyprus EU Presidency

emphasize that alliances are increasingly viewed as long-term strategic partnerships rather than temporary, one-off Erasmus+ projects. The 12 developed prototypes are highly timely. The following week, 150 alliance rectors and presidents will meet in Brussels with European Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas. The core briefing question for that summit aligns exactly with this workshop: What are effective strategies for raising awareness and boosting engagement across students and staff to support alliance sustainability? The workshop summaries will be pushed directly to these leaders to brief them for the Brussels meeting.

The organizing team closed by thanking the European Parliament in Strasbourg for providing a venue that reflects European unity and democracy. Special credit was given to the host alliance, the core organizational staff, the media teams, and the student volunteers.

Additionally, the co-organizing alliances—CIVICA, UNITA, ENHANCE, CHARM-EU, and CIVIS, were thanked for contributing their staff's time to facilitate the two-day event. Participants were encouraged to maintain this momentum during their upcoming monthly topical group meetings.



Photo credit: EPICUR Alliance



Photo credit: EPiCUR Alliance

Outcomes and impact

1. Outcomes

The workshop confirmed that European University Alliances are entering a new stage of development in which building communities is becoming as important as delivering educational and mobility activities.

Participants collaboratively developed **12 practical prototypes** designed to strengthen engagement, recognition, communication and the sense of belonging among students, academics and professional staff. These prototypes emerged from multidisciplinary collaborative work and represent practical approaches that can be adapted across alliances.

The discussions highlighted several common priorities:

- Strengthening community-building beyond project management structures;
- Improving awareness of alliance opportunities;
- Reducing barriers to participation and mobility;
- Recognising contributions from students and staff;
- Communicating more effectively the value of European University Alliances.

The workshop also strengthened collaboration between Community Engagement, Communication & Dissemination and Student-led communities, creating new opportunities for future joint activities.

2. Recommendations

For Policy Dialogue

Based on the insights gathered from this workshop, policy recommendations were extracted.

Extend Funding Cycles to Foster Long-Term Community Growth: Community building is the true engine behind the longevity of European University Alliances, but it cannot be treated as a rushed project deliverable. Current project timelines are structurally too short to create, grow, and sustain meaningful networks.

Recommendation: Advocate for longer, more flexible funding and project cycles from European and national funding bodies. Shift the evaluation metrics from short-term "deliverables" to long-term community resilience and sustainability indicators.

Move High-Impact Initiatives from "Pilot" to "Permanent" Status: The workshop highlighted numerous creative and transformative initiatives that are currently stuck in pilot phases due to a lack of structural backing.

Recommendation: Secure explicit financial and institutional commitment from leadership across all 58 Alliances. Institutionalize high-impact pilot activities by embedding them directly into the core strategic plans and budgets of partner universities.

Resource and Celebrate Cultural and Linguistic Diversity: Diversity is a defining feature and a strength, making alliances a micro-reflection of the European Union itself rather than an operational hurdle to be managed.

Recommendation: Allocate dedicated funding and specialized resources specifically to support multilingualism and cross-cultural engagement. Design community initiatives that actively leverage this diversity as a learning tool and a core asset.

Invest in Building a Genuine Sense of Belonging: Alliances drive real impact and attract active, engaged members only when they become spaces where people genuinely feel they belong.

Recommendation: Prioritize grassroots engagement, student-led initiatives, and inclusive communication channels. Shift the narrative of alliances from purely administrative networks to shared cultural and intellectual spaces.

Secure Long-Term Political and Financial Commitment to Embed European Values: Creating physical and virtual environments where shared European values can be lived out across borders requires sustained, long-term investments.

Recommendation: Engage in continuous political dialogue at both national and EU levels to position European University Alliances as the "new normal" of higher education. Treat the development of cross-border European identity not as a by-product, but as a core strategic objective requiring dedicated, permanent support.

For Communication and Dissemination

The prototypes are actions that can be carried out not only by European University Alliances but also by other European Higher Education institutions. Therefore, it was agreed with FOREU4ALL Communication Manager, that the prototypes will be published on the FOREU4ALL website. Additionally, dissemination on the prototypes can be very useful to increase the impact of the workshop with a broader audience. The prototypes can be included in FOREU4ALL social media and newsletter.

The collaborative work highlighted several recommendations for European University Alliances:

- Adopt participatory communication approaches that foster a genuine sense of belonging;
- Involve students, academics and professional staff in the co-design of alliance activities;
- Communicate the concrete benefits and opportunities offered by alliances in a more accessible and user-centred way;
- Develop inclusive engagement strategies that address barriers related to mobility, accessibility and diversity;
- Recognise and celebrate contributions made by students and staff as a way to strengthen motivation and engagement;
- Continue promoting collaboration among Topical Groups to address community engagement through a transversal perspective.

The primary target audience includes alliance governance bodies, Topical Groups, communication teams, community engagement practitioners and institutional coordinators.

The workshop is expected to influence future FOREU4ALL activities by reinforcing collaboration among Topical Groups, supporting the dissemination of transferable engagement models and providing inspiration for future institutional practices across European University Alliances.

Regarding communication and dissemination, the workshop results were disseminated through the communication channels of FOREU4ALL and several participating alliances, contributing to the visibility of the initiative and encouraging further exchange of good practices.

3. Lessons Learned

Overall, the session demonstrated the immense value of combining keynote discussions with highly interactive collaborative sessions, enabling participants to exchange experiences while co-creating practical solutions. Furthermore, the hybrid format ensured broad European participation and enhanced inclusivity, while the active involvement of the Student-Led Community Topical Group kept student perspectives central to the dialogue. Finally, employing a prototype-based methodology successfully pushed participants beyond general discussion toward generating concrete, transferable outputs that alliances can build upon in the future.

Concluding remarks

The workshop successfully demonstrated that community engagement should be considered a strategic pillar of the European Universities Initiative. Beyond institutional cooperation, participants emphasised the importance of creating authentic communities built on shared values, participation and mutual recognition.

The collaborative methodology, the multidisciplinary dialogue and the development of practical prototypes provided a strong foundation for future work within FOREU4All and across the European University Alliances. The workshop reinforced the idea that long-term institutional transformation depends not only on governance structures and mobility opportunities, but also on fostering meaningful human connections and a shared sense of belonging.

Annexes

Annex 1. [Anonymized list of registrations](#)

Annex 2. [Programme](#)

Annex 3 Posters

- **Aurora:** [Student Ambassadors](#)
- **4EU+:** [Co-creation in action: empowering students to shape the alliance experience](#)
- **ACROSS:** [Relational skills for transnational community engagement, communication and dissemination](#)
- **UnaEuropa:** [#5432Una: Anchoring milestones in meaning](#)
- **UniGreen:** [UniGreen Festival: at the heart of democratic student participation](#)
- **UNITA:** [UNITA Community Building](#)
- **YUFE & EUTOPIA:** [Bridging Borders, Building Belonging](#)
- **NEOLAIa:** [Connecting Communities-Strengthening Engagement and Impact in NEOLAIa Alliance](#)
- **Transform4Europe:** [T4E Green Campus Life, Inclusion and Wellbeing](#)
- **EU-CONEXUS:** [From A student to EU-CONEXUS student: methodology to define and shape a shared student identity](#)
- **EU-CONEXUS:** [Building belonging through co-creation: EU-CONEXUS pathways from schools to stakeholder communities](#)
- **EuroTeQ:** [Enhancing educator engagement](#)
- **EPICUR:** [The EPICUR Centre for International Teaching and Learning](#)
- **BAUHAUS4EU:** [Students and staff together: securing meaningful community engagement](#)
- **EC2U:** [The EC2U Ambassador Programme](#)

Annex 4 Prototypes

- **Annex 4.1 Prototypes targeting students**
 - **PROTOTYPE 1:** [End to End Student Onboarding](#)
 - **PROTOTYPE 2:** [Fast tracks](#)
 - **PROTOTYPE 3:** [Today Elsewhere](#)
 - **PROTOTYPE 4:** [This is not for me](#)
 - **PROTOTYPE 5:** [Home away from home](#)
- **Annex 4.2 Prototypes targeting Faculty & Staff**
 - **PROTOTYPE 6:** [More than a staff week!](#) - Big Bang BIP?
 - **PROTOTYPE 7:** [Research collaboration hub](#) - Joint research database
 - **PROTOTYPE 8:** [Rectors' workshop](#)

- **Annex 4.3: Prototypes targeting Students, Faculty & Staff**
 - PROTOTYPE 9: [Festivalliance](#)
 - PROTOTYPE 10: [CoffeeForAll](#)
 - PROTOTYPE 11: [The Cameleon Bus](#)
 - PROTOTYPE 12: Big Bang BIP