

TCA | Fourth Franco-Dutch strategic dialogue on European Universities Alliances

The Hague, Netherlands
23-24 March 2026

120
participants

23
European
University
Alliances

4
countries

Call to action

This document formulates recommendations expressed by participants of the European Universities Alliances, gathered at the TCA Fourth Franco-Dutch Strategic dialogue on European Universities Alliances 2026. The strategic dialogue took place on 24th March at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. It provided a forum for stakeholders to connect and exchange on the developments of the alliances over the last seven years, to formulate common ambitions for the future, as well as to identify the challenges and opportunities to attain those ambitions.

Organisers



1

Policy context and strategic alignment

There is a strong commitment from the European University Alliances to engage the European Commission, Member States and stakeholders in shaping how the alliances can collectively advance the further integration of the European Education and Research Areas and contribute to key EU priorities, such as competitiveness, sustainability and digitalisation.

2

Transformative impact on higher education institutions (HEIs)

As the alliances have fostered a culture of cooperation and shared purpose, demonstrating their instrumental structural role in modernising higher education, it is recommended that they continue to function as accelerators of institutional change.

3

Collaboration, diversity and institutional learning

Diversity in the type and size of participating HEIs is not an undeniable strength. Smaller institutions of excellence can often represent niche sectors and advocate and contribute to a richer, more inclusive and competitive European higher education ecosystem.

4

Interdisciplinarity and the role of Arts and Humanity

Perspectives from the humanities, social sciences and arts are essential for addressing societal challenges, supporting critical thinking, creativity, and soft skills that are indispensable for excellence and for upholding European values. The STEAM model (including the arts and humanities in STEM education) should be more widely integrated, supporting interdisciplinary learning and teaching.

5

European degree label

Both French and Dutch institutions strongly support the development of the European degree label. Working on definition and streamlining of terminology between Member States regarding education, such as joint degrees, is still necessary. European Universities Alliances can significantly strengthen joint education offers and joint degree programmes, but these should be strategically targeted rather than scaled indiscriminately. Joint programmes must be supported by fit for purpose European funding, flexible design frameworks, and clear articulation of their added value compared to other internationalisation instruments.

6

Research / education link and emerging fields

Emerging and existing education and research fields require an integrated and articulated approach to research, education and societal engagement. The current separation of the Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe programmes does not reflect this need. The alliances therefore advocate strengthening the connection between research and education as this is critical for the long-term success of the alliances.

7

Funding and sustainability

Funding and sustainability require action at both European and national levels, including the recognition of the value of European Universities Alliances by national governments, the coordination of funding, and the extension of benefits beyond consortium members. In order to fulfil their transformative role, it is recommended by the institutions that alliances require predictable, medium term (5–7-year horizon) baseline funding at European level, complemented by integrated cross sector instruments and strong national co investment (e.g., financial and political). Sustainability depends on recognising alliances as core components of the European higher education system, supporting alliance level financial autonomy, and embedding alliance participation into national and institutional funding and policy frameworks.

8

Political support and European values

The European University Initiative enjoys strong political backing in France and the Netherlands. As such, a recommendation to both the Dutch and French governments is to see the alliances as a vital instrument for strengthening European sovereignty and prosperity, for the promotion of shared European values and for enabling coordinated responses to global challenges.

9

Union of Skills: alliances as system shapers

European Universities Alliances are already demonstrating how education can address Europe's skills agenda through interdisciplinary learning, micro credentials, lifelong learning, and close societal engagement. It is recommended to use their contribution to the Union of Skills in shaping systems, not just delivering pilots—by promoting a broad definition of skills, balancing labour market relevance with academic autonomy, and acting as strategic partners in the co design of the European skills policy.

Vision for the future

The shared ambition of the participating European University Alliances is that by 2040, EUAs will be a given in Europe – not something that still needs to be explained, justified or defended, but something natural, embedded and essential.

This includes recognising:

- The substantial achievements so far;
- The need for the alliances to be able to optimise the synergies between research and education, without being constrained by artificial regulatory separations or funding barriers”;
- The alliances reinforce the international reach, attractiveness of European higher education and research via a model that develops cooperation and synergies, talent and resources as a coherent and ambitious voice in a global knowledge landscape;
- The importance for continued support at European and national levels and the imperative of holding space for experimentation.

Annexes

- Programme of the TCA | Fourth Franco-Dutch strategic dialogue on European Universities Alliances
- Report of the dialogue
- Document ‘All you must know about the European Degree’
- Assessment report of the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MESRE) on the transformative role of European Universities