

Multilingualism and Multiculturalism

Terms of Reference

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I. Objectives

The CoP Topical Group on Multilingualism and Multiculturalism will contribute to a more linguistically rich, culturally inclusive, and globally engaged higher education in Europe by promoting linguistic diversity, intercultural communication, global competence, and a stronger culture of collaboration among university alliances.

The group will be guided by the following objectives, which represent key areas of focus without claiming to be an exhaustive list:

- **Promoting Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Higher Education:** The group will support and strengthen the use of multiple languages within university alliances, recognising them as essential for cultural identity, inclusion, and academic excellence. It will promote multilingualism and the appreciation of diverse cultural heritages as integral to the development of a truly European academic space. Efforts will include advocating for inclusive policies and culturally responsive practices that reflect the values of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).
- **Strengthening Educational and Research Practices through Multilingual and Multicultural Approaches:** The group will encourage the integration of multilingual and multicultural dimensions into teaching, learning, and research. This includes supporting the development of inclusive curricula, content in multiple languages, intercultural pedagogy, and collaborative research in areas such as language acquisition, translation studies, and sociolinguistics. The group will also promote the use and development of digital resources, including AI tools, where they support multilingual and intercultural engagement. Particular attention will also be given to challenges and opportunities arising in the context of English-medium instruction (EMI).
- **Supporting Research on Multilingualism and Multiculturalism:** The group will actively encourage research that takes multilingualism and multiculturalism as primary topics of investigation. This includes fostering theoretical, empirical, and comparative research across disciplines, supporting researchers and alliances in producing new knowledge and critical perspectives on language, culture, inclusion, and global engagement in higher education.
- **Encouraging Institutional Cooperation and Policy Alignment across Alliances:** The group will facilitate the sharing of practices and the coordination of policies across European university alliances. This includes collecting and disseminating good practice in the governance of linguistic and cultural diversity, and supporting institutional strategies for inclusion, recognition of competences, and equitable access to multilingual and multicultural education.
- **Promoting Intercultural and Global Competence:** The group will support efforts to develop intercultural and global competences among students, teachers, staff and institutions, fostering the ability to understand, communicate and collaborate across languages and cultures. This includes encouraging reflection on difference, facilitating intercultural dialogue, and promoting participation in diverse and inclusive educational environments across the alliances.
- **Enabling Shared Learning and Deepened Collaboration among Alliances:** Recognising that the richness of multilingual and multicultural practices resides within the individual university alliances, the group will work to identify, document and disseminate examples and experiences from across the network. It will create platforms for mutual learning and foster meaningful and sustained dialogue and collaboration between alliances, supporting both innovation and coherence in the development of inclusive academic environments.
- **Contributing to European and National Policy Development:** The group will engage in policy dialogue and advocacy to promote multilingual and multicultural education and research at the European and national levels. It will contribute to the formulation of policy recommendations,

participate in strategic consultations, and support the articulation of a shared vision aligned with EU values and goals.

- **Embedding Monitoring and Reflexive Development:** The group will promote mechanisms for the regular evaluation and refinement of multilingual and multicultural practices, based on feedback from diverse stakeholders. It will contribute to the continuous development of inclusive strategies through evidence-based reflection, shared benchmarking, and responsiveness to evolving needs and contexts.

II. Background

Multilingualism and multiculturalism are at the heart of both the European University initiative and the wider European project. They are essential for promoting inclusive, accessible and high-quality education, supporting transnational cooperation and enhancing global engagement within the European Higher Education and Research Areas. European University Alliances (henceforth, EUAs) are key drivers in advancing these priorities, ensuring that linguistic and cultural diversity becomes an asset rather than a barrier, in line with the EU's motto "United in diversity".

Given the multilingual and multicultural composition of EUAs, plurilingual competence, translanguaging and intercultural and global competence are essential to promoting equal participation and integration of students and staff. European language policies, governance of linguistic diversity and multilingual pedagogies play a key role in shaping inclusive institutional strategies in line with EU commitments to social cohesion, mobility and dissemination of knowledge. Furthermore, we believe that promoting this is not only a matter of academic excellence, but also a moral imperative, reflecting our common humanity and commitment to building a more just, peaceful and sustainable world for all.

In the context of digitisation and internationalisation, digital multilingualism, AI-assisted translation and intercultural mediation offer opportunities to improve accessibility in education and research. Similarly, institutional approaches to linguistic and cultural inclusion, diversity, equity and belonging are essential to ensure that EUAs remain open and inclusive spaces for students, academics and administrators alike. This thematic group will serve as a collaborative platform where alliances can share best practices, develop concrete recommendations, and address key challenges in managing multilingual and multicultural environments. It will contribute to policy dialogue by engaging both across the 65 alliances and within FOREU4ALL, as well as supporting the dissemination of good practices through meetings, workshops, collaborative projects, and disseminating effective policies, inclusion frameworks and digital multilingual tools.

By strengthening multilingual and multicultural practices, this group will support the transformation of European universities into truly inclusive and globally connected spaces, ensuring that the EHEA and ERA remain competitive, accessible and innovative.

Expected concrete outputs/results

To foster inclusion, innovation, and internationalization in European higher education, the topical group will organize events, contribute to FOREU4ALL and other relevant workshops and publish outputs in the following areas:

- Multilingualism and multiculturalism in education.
- Intercultural competence and inclusion.
- Artificial intelligence and digital solutions in education.

- Monitoring and evaluation of policies and good practices at institutional, national, and European levels.

As results of the sharing of good practices among the alliances and relevant stakeholders in the above listed topics, the expected outputs include the following (for further details, see the provisional working plan):

- Sharing good practices and harmonising development work on language, culture and inclusion policies across alliances.
- Publication of papers, policy statements as well as white papers to map and assess practices across alliances.
- Dissemination of the outputs through various channels, e.g., conferences, European Commission bodies, etc.
- Co-organizing workshops and seminars.
- Networking with other colleagues and researchers which may lead to future European funded project proposals (e.g., COST Action, WIDERA projects, etc.).
- Mapping multilingual and multicultural practices within EUAs
- Mapping and comparison of existing and emerging language and cultural policies in EUAs
- Guidelines for the promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity in higher education
- Case studies and good practices of multilingual and multicultural policies
- Workshops and policy dialogues on multilingual governance and global competence
- Digital resources to promote multilingual and intercultural engagement

III. Work plan and working modalities

Work Plan and Provisional Timeline

The group will be led by the three co-chairs, with sub-theme group chairs overseeing specific topics and activities such as workshops, seminars and collaborative projects. Participation will be flexible, allowing members to contribute according to their capacity. A common platform for communication and dissemination will be used to ensure visibility and avoid reliance on individual alliances or universities.

To ensure effective collaboration while maintaining cost efficiency and accessibility, the topical group and its subgroups will primarily operate through online meetings, supplemented by occasional on-site meetings. Among others, the FOREU4ALL on-site and hybrid workshops will also provide a platform for face-to-face encounters.

Furthermore, on-site and hybrid meetings can be organized with the use of Erasmus+ individual staff exchange funding as well.

Meeting structure and frequency: the topical group will meet regularly on a bimonthly basis, with additional ad hoc meetings as needed. The subgroups will follow a similar pattern, with adjustments to the timeline of their assignments, e.g., more frequent meetings when a deliverable is approaching. Ad hoc meetings can be arranged for urgent matters.

Internal communication and collaboration: members of the topical group and its subgroups will primarily communicate via MS Teams or any similar platform (hosted by a member university) and email. For virtual meetings, video conferencing tools such as Zoom or MS Teams will be used. The group already started

sharing a Google Drive folder and a Padlet page to collect ideas and to brainstorm and thus already has a common platform to be developed further.

External communication and collaboration: whenever needed, the topical group and its subgroups will consult with other FOREU4ALL CoP thematic groups, the chairs of such topical groups, FOREU4ALL Policy Dialogue representatives and any relevant stakeholders and representatives of relevant organizations such as the European Commission.

Organization of virtual, on-site and hybrid events, such as panel discussions, seminars, and exhibitions, will provide opportunities for collaboration across CoP topical groups, relevant stakeholders, and in select cases with the public to enhance outreach and engagement.

The modalities of dissemination and exploitation will include text, image and video, preferably with translations and/or content adapted language versions to address special geographical, political and cultural contexts.

All communication will be provided in an accessible format. As a primary platform, the group plans to use the FOREU4ALL website.

Work will be organized in dedicated subgroups that focus on specific topics and develop outputs. Based on preliminary negotiations among the contributors, the first broad subgroups will be (1) Policy Development and Implementation, (2) Pluriliteracies, and (3) Multiculturalism. Each subgroup will be led by two co-chairs. As the project progresses, the subgroup structure will be regularly revised and if necessary, new subgroups can be established and existing subgroups can be merged or closed down.

The topical group will target diverse representation, inclusive participation and equitable access to its activities and outcomes.

- Diverse representation in decision making by electing leaders in a balanced way across genders, ethnicity, and geographical location.
- Inclusive participation from all EUAs, involving early-career researchers, students, and staff from diverse backgrounds to provide different perspectives.
- Addressing bias and discrimination in decision making through a zero-tolerance policy.
- Accessibility: we will provide accessible meeting formats, e.g., hybrid options at family-friendly times and considering time-zone differences to enable participation from all members.
- Inclusive multilingual communication: we will promote multilingual communication in meetings, events and external communication and dissemination of the outputs to reflect Europe's linguistic diversity.

Provisional Timeline

The activities of the CoP Topical Group on Multilingualism and Multiculturalism will align with the overarching FOREU4ALL project timeline. The following is a tentative schedule, subject to adjustments as the project develops:

Year 1 (May 2025 – May 2026)

- Establish subgroup structures and leadership.
- Initiate mapping exercises and identify good practices.
- Launch internal collaboration platforms.
- Participate in the first series of workshops (tentatively August 2025 to June 2026).

Year 2 (May 2026 – May 2027)

- Develop initial outputs, e.g., policy papers, good practice guidelines, and case studies.
- Commence dissemination activities, including use of WP4 channels.
- Engage in the second series of WP3/WP4 workshops (tentatively July 2026 to April 2027).
- Conduct a mid-term review of subgroup progress and consider restructuring if necessary.

Year 3 (May 2027 – May 2028)

- Consolidate outputs and continue dissemination activities.
- Broaden engagement with WP3 for policy contributions.
- Participate in the third series of WP3/WP4 workshops (tentatively May 2027 to February 2028).
- Prepare sustainability and follow-up strategies.
- Finalise major outputs progressively before May 2028.

Final phase (May 2028 – October 2028)

- Dissemination of remaining deliverables, if any, and consolidation of lessons learned.
- Contribute to final project reporting and evaluation.
- Liaise with WP4 for integration into the final FO-EU4ALL event and related communication activities.

All timeframes remain tentative, pending final confirmation of workshop dates and evolving project priorities.

IV. Inputs to WP3 Policy Dialogue & WP4 Communication and Dissemination

The topical group will engage with WP3 and WP4 not solely through workshops but through multiple integrated activities aimed at maximising cross-work package synergies:

Workshops

- The group aims to contribute to 2–3 workshops organised during the FOREU4ALL project cycle, aligning with thematic priorities and ensuring meaningful participation.
- Tentative timing for workshops aligns with the progressive rollout: two workshops between August 2025 and June 2026; three between July 2026 and April 2027; and three between May 2027 and February 2028.

Policy Dialogue (WP3)

- Collaboration with WP3 will extend beyond workshops to include regular liaison regarding policy-relevant findings and recommendations stemming from subgroup activities.
- The group will seek active involvement in shaping discussion topics, providing empirical and conceptual input, and co-developing advocacy strategies that draw from the topical group's outputs.

Communication & Dissemination (WP4)

- Outputs such as guidelines, white papers, case studies, and digital resources will be disseminated via WP4 channels, including the FOREU4ALL website, social media, and stakeholder events.
- The group will propose tailored multilingual and multicultural content for broader dissemination, ensuring relevance and accessibility across diverse institutional and national contexts.

Ad hoc Collaborations

- Opportunities for joint activities with other work packages and topical groups will be explored, particularly for transversal themes such as diversity, inclusion, and digital innovation.

Given the limitation of eight on-site workshops for twenty topical groups, participation in multiple workshops will be subject to thematic relevance and availability. The group acknowledges this constraint and will strategically prioritise engagement opportunities.

V. Members

Members will include educators, academics, administrators and policy makers from as many EUAs as possible with an interest in multilingualism and multiculturalism across disciplines and domains of application. Members will contribute to policy recommendations, training initiatives and the development and/or dissemination of digital tools, helping to shape best practices in European higher education. We expect at least two members per alliance, but given our broad topic we would welcome more members, on a permanent or temporary basis.