

Research and Innovation

Terms of Reference

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I. Objectives

The R&I TG, which will be open to all Alliances, will be composed of a “Core Group” chaired by a GCT (and will consider R&I dimensions in particular as they relate to alliances such as joint R&I strategy development/updating, the ERA policy agenda, Horizon scanning). It is expected that participants will be active in relation to the implementation and/or development of an R&I agenda in their alliance.

Objectives:

- Follow/influence EU R&I policy/programme design including research-informed education, focusing on potential opportunities/challenges for the Alliance R&I missions in strong connection with FOREU4ALL WP3
- Discuss and share practices on implementation of ERA policy agenda actions (e.g., Open Science, Citizen Science)
- Share experiences/practices in setting/updating & delivering joint strategies ensuring an EDI based approach; (e.g., infrastructure)
- Work to secure an R&I investment pathway (with WP3)
- Contribute to the wider dissemination of learnings with FOREU4ALL WP4
- Promote, help create and make use of inter-alliances projects
- Focus on a number of thematic subgroups – to be agreed collectively by the Topical Group (including Research Infrastructure) - to facilitate a more in-depth discussion and progression of themes, overcoming obstacles and challenges

The objectives are spread over a timeline which varies from mid to longer term. This overall TG will be active until 30 Oct 2028. Horizon scanning and Policy influencing will be ongoing and responsive to EC strategy/policy development in areas of relevance for R&I and the alliances. The ERA agenda discussions will likely align with the timeline of that agenda (2025-2027), working to secure an investment pathway (with WP3) will coincide with the timeline of negotiation of the next MFF (to 2028) and work will also aim to focus (subject to TG participant engagement) on an update of first FOREU reports on “gender equality in R&I” and “implementation of R&I long term strategies”.

The 3 inaugural thematic subgroups will agree on their own timelines based on workplans which are being collectively developed. Regular feedback from thematic sub-groups & review at M30 of the outputs with decision to update and/or discontinue sub-groups. Annual progress of the subgroups will also feed back into the annual WP2 reports.

This TG will be active until 30 Oct 2028 & proposed outputs are:

1. 5 online meetings of the Core Group per year
2. ~5 online meetings of each thematic sub-group per year
3. Update of first FOREU reports on “gender equality in R&I” and “implementation of R&I long term strategies”, (as outlined above - subject to TG member input)
4. Mapping of opinions from Alliances on R&I themes to support Contributions/Position papers, with WP3
5. Showcasing concrete best practices/success stories with WP4
6. At least (co-)organisation of 1 workshop and/or contribution to relevant transversal workshops & to the final FOREU4ALL dissemination event.

The topical group are expected to be an active group looking at where we can collectively work on thematic topics and horizon scan what is happening in the European R&I environment (as it relates to alliances) interacting where necessary via WP3 and WP4. Policy makers engaged at national and European

level in R&I policies are therefore a target audience. Cognisant that alliances are competing with each other, the focus is on activities which benefit all alliances and, where working together can progress thematic areas and exchange best practice ideas on implementation of framework conditions for building R&I excellence within/beyond Alliances to HEIs/external stakeholders.

Inaugural thematic subgroups within this topical group may yield additional target audiences.

II. Background

R&I activities in alliances can play a key role in ambitious transnational institutional cooperation development and in the strengthening of public-private partnerships, bringing business and Alliances together at a local, regional and European level and delivering a competitive Europe. The ability of Alliances to contribute to the delivery of a future-skills-based innovative education, talent development and to a resilient, inclusive and sustainable society can be enhanced by leveraging their R&I mission and sharing of practices through FOREU4ALL. The report on the outcomes and transformational potential of the European Universities initiative supports the importance of the inclusion of the R&I dimension. EU Researcher and Research Manager competence frameworks align with the recent communication on enabling attractive and sustainable careers in HE.

In 2025, we will see EC proposals and policies which have major impact on the Alliances, including the next Multi-annual Financial Framework, Research Framework programme (FP10), competitiveness fund, Union of Skills, ERA policy agenda 2025-27, EU Global Gateway, etc. The policy briefs provided by the pilot Alliances in their SwafS funding (2021-24) are testament to their relevance in the delivery of the ERA policy agenda. The Alliances have a critical role to provide collective lived experience of the complexity of ERA agenda areas & interconnections which will inform feasible systematic change. This aligns with the description of the Alliances as experimental platforms in the Heitor Report. The ERA will only be as strong as the R&I communities that co-develop and implement it; the Alliances can be a key stakeholder in this regard. The dissemination and exchange of such experience is vital across the Alliances and beyond to the broader higher education sector, to other R&I ERA actors including policy makers. 2025 may also be the year in which an outline of the investment pathway for alliances is revealed and work towards ensuring a multi-mission approach is vital. The further exploration and creation of synergies between education, training and R&I is relevant not just in the context of EU policy synergies such as that between the ERA & EHEA, but it will also support high quality inclusive and learning experiences across our Alliances and in their transdisciplinary partnership with stakeholders leading also to global gateway cooperation.

Activities and Merits of the two former groups: **FOREU1 R&I Subgroup and FOREU2 Swafs Subgroup**

- Contribution to the implementation of the ERA policy agenda. The groups also promoted dialogue with and recommendations to the policy makers for the continuation and strengthening of joint R&I activities within Alliances.
- Participation in a dedicated session on R&I in Alliances at the EU Spanish Presidency Forum in Barcelona (September 14-15 2023).
- Feedback on the WIDERA EEI call and positioning of the Alliances resulted in a modification of next EEI call.
- Collectively enabled DG RTD & DG EAC to better understand the R&I needs and feedback provided to possible future investment pathways.
- Contribution to the document submitted to DG EAC & DG RTD on synergies between research and education.
- Organisation of two cross-Alliance events (December 2023 and October 2024) on SwafS projects.

- Preparation and dissemination of two joint reports on “gender equality in R&I” and “implementation of R&I long term strategies”.

III. Work plan and working modalities

Work Plan and Provisional Timeline

1st Meeting: Elect GCT, discussion on the selection of topics for the thematic subgroups (in addition to Research Infrastructure) which could be set up and voting process is outlined and will be initiated. Review and discussion of the ToR. Discussion on core agenda activities to take place.

2nd Meeting: Invite DG RTD representative to discuss the ERA agenda 2025-27 if available. Results of the Thematic Subgroup vote is presented and discussed. Invite thematic leads to present/discuss development of subgroups.

Meetings of core group will be every 2 months/ Similarly, when operational, meetings of the thematic subgroups will be every 2 months (cognisance will be taken of summer breaks, etc).

3. Design of sub-group activities & timeline and feed into TG outputs. Close interaction with WP3 will be enabled.
4. Timely respond to influencing and lobbying opportunities linked to events such as the MFF or FP10 proposals– via WP3.
5. Update of FOREU reports with a to-be-agreed timeline (subject to TG member participation).
6. Best practice examples submitted by the TG will be validated by alliance coordinators before being published via WP4.
7. The topical group (and hence the subgroups) report annually to WP2 via the GCT. This also provides an appropriate time for the core group to review the ToR and the activity space and make any updates/adjustments if collectively agreed which can be then communicated to WP2.
8. Regular feedback from thematic sub-groups & review at M30 of the outputs with decision to update and/or discontinue sub-groups
9. Discuss workshop (aligned to calls for workshops) & online webinars (likely linked to policy developments, links to other topical groups such as EDI or internationalisation and presentation of outputs from thematic groups).
10. Contribute to FOREU4ALL final event.

As outlined above, a more in-depth discussion and progression of R&I themes of interest to the alliances will be advanced via several inaugural thematic sub-groups (~ 3 topics selected collegially). Each subgroup will be co-led by an expert lead and 1 member of the GCT (It is proposed that the role of sub-group lead is generally for one year). It will be composed of expert members (a max of 2 per alliance) in the related fields which may not be the same individuals as the core members of the TG. The exact profile of the participants of these subgroups will depend on the thematic subgroup but the expectation is that such

individuals be engaged already in that field or striving to prepare for engagement in that field in order to progress this aspect of their alliance.

External experts may be invited to attend for agenda items both at the core TG level and at the thematic subgroup level, when relevant.

Usually, a max of 2 individuals from a given Alliance may attend a given meeting. The TG will actively contribute to calls for transversal workshops and will also organise online seminars on priority topics. The TG work plan will be kept agile to meet Alliances' needs & the changing policy context.

Agenda and Working Modalities

Agenda:

Core Group: GCT is responsible for the agenda

Thematic sub-groups: each duo of sub-group Lead & 1 GCT member is responsible for the agenda

Meeting minutes and distribution of information:

Core Group: GCT & WP2 Officer

Thematic sub-groups: sub-group Leads

Each meeting will be of the order of 1.5 hours in duration.

Members are expected to read the notes (**which will be stored in the Community of Practice TEAMS environment**) and, where necessary, will seek approval within their Alliance to implement actions as agreed. In all instances, as members represent their alliances, they are expected to actively participate and act as disseminators within their alliances of the work of the R&I topical group/subgroups activities underway, agreed actions and outputs.

Considerations on Equality & Diversity in organisational modalities

The pact on R&I in Europe has set **EDI** as a priority. In addition, the ERA policy agenda 2025-2027 explicitly focuses on strengthening EDI through Gender Equality plans, promoting the integration of gender dimension in R&I, enhancing EDI mainstreaming and enabling synergies in the context of other ERA actions. Thus, all topics addressed by the TG will include explicit consideration of EDI views to ensure that they are integral parts of all policies, shared and developed practices, strategies, and action plans. Also, an update to the first FOREU reports on "gender equality in R&I" is proposed. Synergies with the EDI TG will be enabled.

EU level EDI updates and their implications for R&I and for the alliances will be reflected back into the TG for discussion/feedback (with WP3 if relevant). All activities conducted and the mechanisms of participation in those activities will also function in full application of the EDI principles.

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

Some members of this R&I TG are also members of WP3 and will actively ensure that a two-way communication process is enabled and that response to EC policy proposals/strategies will be collectively considered and progressed. Where necessary, the lead/co-lead from WP3 will be invited to a R&I TG group or a member of the GCT (with thematic lead if relevant) will attend a WP3 meeting or meet the WP3 lead/co-leads.

As outlined above, best practice examples submitted by the TG will be validated by alliance coordinators before being published via WP4 in line with the methodology utilised by WP4.

Where webinars or workshops take place with R&I TG participation, active links to WP4 will be enabled through GCT/Thematic Lead and a small taskforce of TG members set up specifically for that event to which members of WP4 will be invited to participate in.

V. Members

Members of the R&I TG are expected to be active with respect to R&I development in their respective alliance. Thematic leads and thematic participants are expected to have expertise in that thematic field, capable of progressing the thematic to produce outputs relevant for the alliance against a collectively agreed timeline.

Active participation

All members are encouraged to contribute actively to the group by joining the discussions, participating in policy briefs, dissemination activities and providing suggestions for future agenda items and possible speakers. As needed, smaller groups with a lead are established to work on specific topics/workshop development etc.

In all instances it is acknowledged that time allocated by participants to the R&I TG is in addition to their alliance level activity and cannot be excessive.

Duration of online meetings

≤1.5 hours - The Chair/Vice Chairs (or subtopic lead) proposes to organise a meeting every 2 months and additional Thematic group meetings. The date/time for a thematic subgroup meeting, may if feasible be based on a Doodle but meetings of the core R&I TG will be based on dates nominated by the GCT taking into account holiday periods and/or availability of experts/other TG GCTs invited to speak at a given meeting.

Regularity

Core Group: ~ 5/year

Thematic sub-groups: ~ 5/year