



**European
University
Foundation**

Annual report 2020



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EUF Annual Report 2020

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Foreword

This Annual Report looks back at an extraordinary year during which we have all been profoundly impacted by the outbreak of COVID-19.

For a network that takes pride on its problem solving abilities this was unusual position to be in: a pandemic with a devastating impact on the issues we care most about, and that we were powerless to control or influence. But unity is never as important as when facing uncertainty, and standing side by side with friends and colleagues we know and trust, showed yet again that together we add to more than the sum of our individual parts.

And side by side we stood throughout 2020, often meeting online to exchange ideas and discuss ways to mitigate the havoc caused by COVID-19; we redoubled efforts to ensure the key dossiers we have been working on would continue to advance as planned; we launched new initiatives aimed at shaping key discussions about the new Erasmus+ programme, and we continued to grow, both as a network of like-minded professionals and institutions, and in terms of the EUF capacity and resources. We have shown to be resilient, and we are

proud that our collective strength has helped, to the extent possible, the higher education community to face truly formidable challenges.

This Annual Report aims to provide insight on these actions and processes and consolidates some of the lessons learnt throughout 2020. In a year where the twin nightmares of COVID-19 and Brexit have joined forces to test the limits of the European ideals, the work carried out by the EUF and its extraordinary universities continues to shine a light on why more, rather than less, international cooperation is essential to bring about a sense of togetherness and solidarity that knows no borders.

João BACELAR
Executive Manager,
European University Foundation



2020 at a glance

70

 Network members

with **22** charter members and **48** associate universities representing **30** countries

6900

combined participants of online events

3

 platforms (re-)launched

- Online Learning Agreement
- Erasmus+ App
- MyAcademicID authentication

1600

 higher education institutions registered on the

Erasmus+ Covid-19 Mobility Status website

People reached

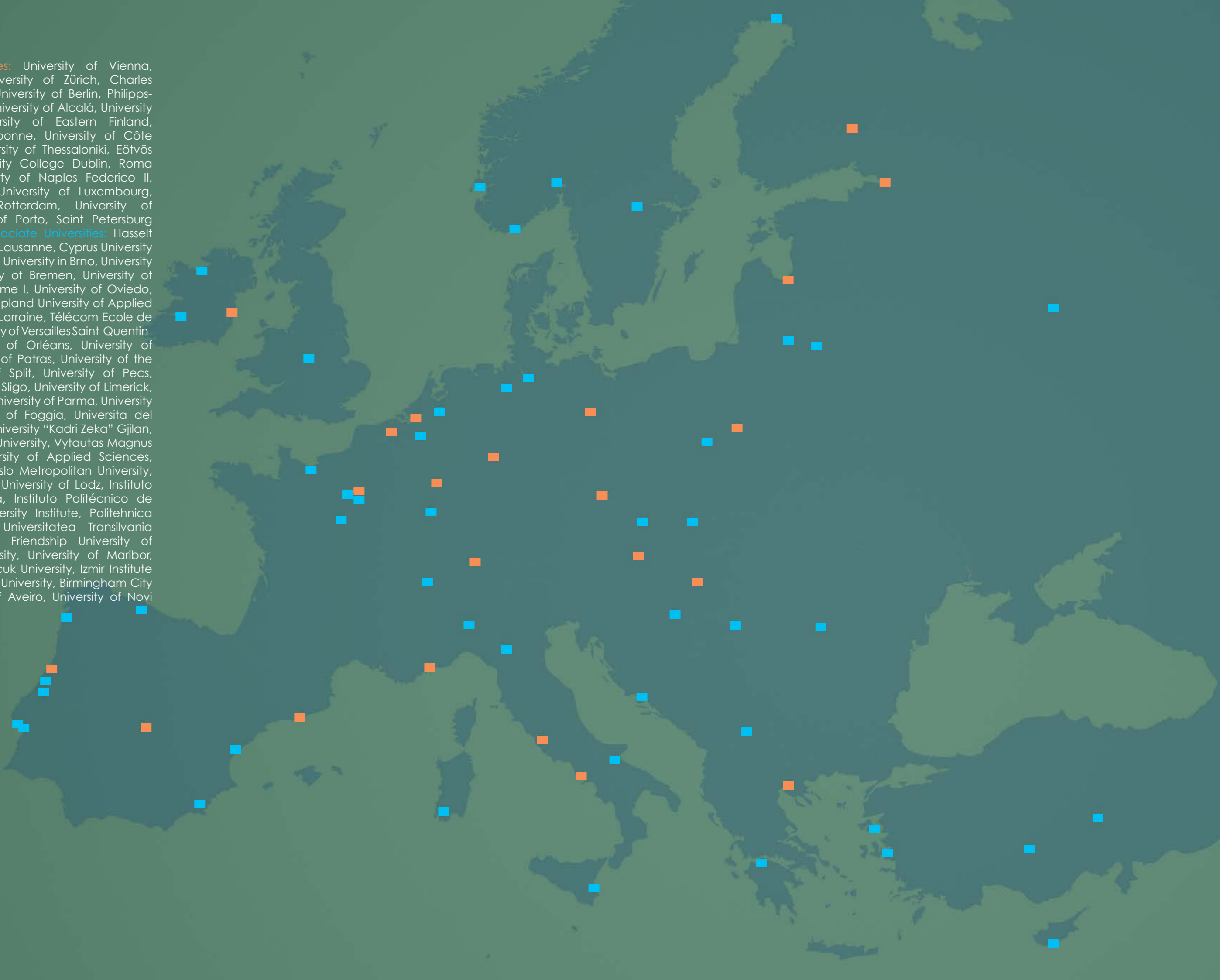
with activities and projects

- From the network: **593** staff
- Erasmus Without Paper cover over **2500** Higher Education Institutions and its Dashboard hosts **4000** staff accounts
- Over **5000** Online Learning Agreements generated per month

16

 Staff coworkers

■ **Charter Universities:** University of Vienna, Ghent University, University of Zürich, Charles University, Humboldt University of Berlin, Philipps-Universität Marburg, University of Alcalá, University of Barcelona, University of Eastern Finland, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, University of Côte d'Azur, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Eötvös Loránd University, Trinity College Dublin, Roma Tre University, University of Naples Federico II, University of Latvia, University of Luxembourg, Erasmus University Rotterdam, University of Warsaw, University of Porto, Saint Petersburg State University ■ **Associate Universities:** Hasselt University, University of Lausanne, Cyprus University of Technology, Mendel University in Brno, University of Hamburg, University of Bremen, University of Vigo, University of Jaume I, University of Oviedo, University of Murcia, Lapland University of Applied Sciences, University of Lorraine, Télécom Ecole de Management, University of Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, University of Orléans, University of Normandie, University of Patras, University of the Aegean, University of Split, University of Pecs, Institute of Technology Sligo, University of Limerick, University of Cagliari, University of Parma, University of Catania, University of Foggia, Università del Piemonte Orientale, University "Kadri Zeka" Gjilan, European Humanities University, Vytautas Magnus University, HAN University of Applied Sciences, University of Agder, Oslo Metropolitan University, Western Norway UAS, University of Lodz, Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa, Instituto Politécnico de Coimbra, Lisbon University Institute, Politehnica University Timisoara, Universitatea Transilvania din Braşov, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Örebro University, University of Maribor, University of Zilina, Selçuk University, Izmir Institute of Technology, Erciyes University, Birmingham City University, University of Aveiro, University of Novi Sad.





For a more inclusive Erasmus

#Erasmus500: towards a truly European grant

In an attempt to ensure that students from all socio-economic and personal backgrounds can benefit from an Erasmus+ exchange, we worked jointly with the Erasmus Student Network and the European Students' Union on the [#Erasmus500 declaration](#). The objective was to introduce a simpler grant scheme in the Erasmus+ programme comprising a universal baseline of 500 EUR per month. The campaign was built on three pillars, namely:

1) Strong support: A much higher grant than what is currently the case to make Erasmus a realistic prospect for all; **2) Simplicity:** A European grant for the students of Europe — simple, fair, and transparent; **3) Inclusiveness:** Ensure that working students can afford to go on Erasmus, rather than being structurally excluded from it.

A [campaign website](#) was launched for the purpose of harvesting support from policymakers, stakeholders, and individuals. The results of the campaign exceeded our best expectations, with 5 Members of the European Parliament, 20 Higher Education stakeholder organisations, 69 Higher Education Institutions and 28 student organisations supporting the campaign. We then hosted a webinar, also referred to as [Erasmus Salon](#), with Members of the European Parliament and representatives of Rectors' conferences as speakers. Having heard both the political and practical will to implement #Erasmus500 in the new programme, an [Open Letter](#) to the European Commission was published on behalf of the signatories, contributing to a much needed debate on alternative solutions to support mobility for all students.

"I am convinced that the young generation is not only the future, but as well the present of the European Union, that is why we need to encourage and to stand next to them. Erasmus500 is a simple, fair, and transparent

proposal that aims at creating equal opportunities for the under-represented groups in international mobility that is why I strongly support it."

Corina CREȚU
Member of the European Parliament,
Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats

The digital transformation of international student mobility

The last year of the Erasmus+ programming period was the opportunity for us to consolidate the results of projects that have been led throughout the 2014-2020 EU programming period with the objective to digitise workflows and substantially reduce administrative burden on students and staff.

The renewal of the Erasmus+ App was kicked-off in January 2020 under the coordination of Eötvös Loránd University and in close cooperation with the Erasmus Student Network. This cooperation has paved the way for an entirely renewed version of the Erasmus+ App which became available in December 2020. The new application benefits from the progress achieved in the Erasmus Without Paper and MyAcademicID projects, and in addition to being available through both major App stores it is also accessible in its desktop version at <https://erasmusapp.eu>, helping to enhance its inclusiveness. We believe this has been an incredible step forward to make the Erasmus+ mobile App the single access point of entry for students to the new Erasmus+ programme, allowing them to find all the crucial information they need to experience a high-quality mobility experience abroad.

In the meantime, the Online Learning Agreement entered a critical phase, as the digital Learning Agreements are set to become mandatory in the Erasmus+ programme in 2021. The tool has therefore been entirely re-developed by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in the context of the OLA 3.0 project, ensuring new levels of robustness and scalability. The revamped OLA was launched in October 2020 and has generated over 15,000 Learning Agreements thereafter in 2020.

In March 2020, the [Inter-Institutional Agreement Manager](#) was launched, thanks to the efforts led by the University of Porto. The testing of the new official Inter-Institutional Agreement template and of its connection with Erasmus Without Paper was carried out until October 2020 and revealed a satisfaction rate of 76%, based on feedback from almost 500 International Relation Officers. Several further improvements have been introduced after the end of the testing phase and informed the finalisation of the new official Inter-Institutional Agreement template.

The MyAcademicID project was also successfully concluded, having delivered an updated European Student Identifier standard and a sophisticated and powerful authentication platform that bridges the eduGAIN and

eIDAS ecosystems. Several large outreach activities have also taken place to inform HEIs, Erasmus+ National Agencies and National Research and Education Networks on how to implement the eID and enable students to benefit from the simplified authentication procedures via the MyAcademicID identification and access management platform, which was since deployed on the new Online Learning Agreement and Erasmus+ App. The project has earned its place [among the success stories](#) of the Connecting Europe Facility programme.

In addition to all of this work, 2020 was also a year where the network had to step up to ensure the continued availability of Erasmus Without Paper and its Dashboard with its own resources, further to the completion of the project funding cycle in 2019. This digital infrastructure provides critical services for several thousand universities and would simply stop existing if not for the commitment of the EUF and its universities.

“The transition to digitally managed Erasmus+ mobilities is already starting to bear fruits and the digital exchange of Learning Agreements and Inter-Institutional Agreements through Erasmus Without Paper – a key milestone - would not have been possible without the ambition, commitment and drive of the digital champions within the EUF network!”

Daiga KUZMANE
Digital Strategy Officer,
European University Foundation

A comprehensive and growing network

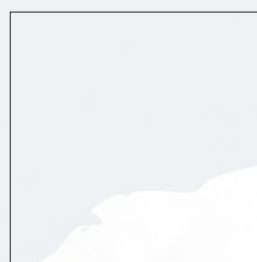
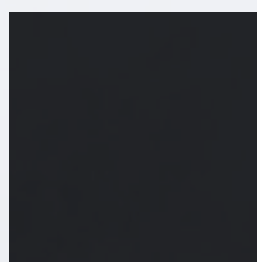
In 2020, the EUF network has continued to grow at a rapid pace: 16 universities have joined us, amounting to an increase of roughly 30% in size and adding up to a total of 70 universities spread across 30 countries. The vast reach of the network is in keeping with the responsibilities and contribution the EUF has taken upon itself regarding its core mission of contributing to the modernisation of the European Higher Education Area, which we do by acting on five pillars of activities. We seek to support our universities' initiatives and projects, ranging from their design and incubation to contributing to making them a reference during implementation to ensure optimal impact of results.

The scale of the network also translates into a considerable number of cooperation opportunities among its membership. The network itself is also the beneficiary of an Erasmus+ Operating Grant, under the programme's Key Action 3, which contributes to put our universities in a unique position to shape policymaking processes at European level, and at the same time benefit from first-hand insights on such processes.

Several of our activities focused on clarifying how mobility and e-learning can be best combined to help overcome the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. By making a clear distinction

between concepts and methodologies as universities from across Europe were forced into remote learning settings, we feel we made an important contribution to prevent "virtual mobilities" from occupying a significant place in the EU policy framework, which is something that would have subverted the original goals of Erasmus. We are however looking positively at the introduction of blended mobility, combining both physical components and online learning opportunities, in the new Erasmus+ programme and it is in this context that an EUF Task Force, led by the University of Barcelona, looked into pressing related challenges and opportunities.

In Spring 2020, we were also invited by Commissioner Mariya Gabriel, alongside national authorities, quality assurance agencies, HEIs and other relevant stakeholders to join an expert group that has proposed a common definition and recommendations for a European approach to the development and uptake of micro-credentials. Besides proposing a common European definition and characteristics, a roadmap of actions was also outlined. While the proposed roadmap will unfold over the next 4 years, its recommendations already helped to inform: the European Skills Agenda, the Communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 and the Digital Education Action Plan. >>





We are also proud to count many of our members among the selected universities for the European Universities initiative call for proposals. The network has since several years been actively contributing to shape this flagship initiative and has thus remained neutral with regards to these applications (only joining as an associate partner in European University initiative proposals). We remain a committed partner of the European Commission through our involvement in the relevant expert groups through which the European Universities Initiative is monitored, regularly engaging with our membership on how the initiative and forthcoming call for proposals can be improved. We are also looking forward to seeing a spill-over effect of selected initiative results to benefit the whole European Higher Education community and are also working with a number of these Alliances to see how the current digitisation initiatives can support the deployment of effective European campuses.

Beyond the cooperation avenues triggered through specific projects, 2020 has also been the year of consolidating a transversal cooperation forum between project coordinators to exchange best practices on project management, dissemination, quality assurance and management of change. We believe this sort of meeting place will make project implementation activities of greater quality, and therefore enhance their potential impact.

“Ghent University’s membership of the EUF network allows its International Office to keep up to speed with and contribute to major developments in internationalisation that have the potential for a broad and deep impact on the entire European higher education sector, notably through the facilitation of its participation in key projects. It plays a vital role in realising the ambition to be a pioneer in the internationalisation sector and the Erasmus+ programme.”

Andries VERSPEETEN

Policy Advisor, International Relations Office
Ghent University

Spearheading the Erasmus+ green transition

Over the past 150 years, the concentration of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere has risen to record levels, accounting for an average increase in global temperature of 0.85-1.0 °C. According to international climate experts, global temperature rise should not exceed 2 °C to prevent the most dangerous consequences of climate change. This fact has not been lost on younger generations, and given the climatic emergency we are facing, the EUF has made the goal of a carbon neutral programme one of its key priorities when lobbying for the 2021-2027 Erasmus+.

This 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme will seek to pave the way for a green and sustainable European education area, focusing on accelerating the use of more sustainable mobility and fostering behavioural changes in individual preferences, cultural values and awareness for sustainable consumption habits and lifestyles. This priority is in line with the objectives of the European Green Deal, which is another ambitious programme of the European Union, aiming to make Europe the most environmentally friendly continent, completely carbon neutral by 2050. With a budget of 150 billion, mobilised by the Just Transition Mechanism, the plan will target a fair and just green transition, that leaves no one behind. It is only natural that the Erasmus+, as a student and staff mobility and academic cooperation programme and one of the EU's

most known achievements, supports the green transition and the European Green Deal.

In addition to making this a priority topic from a policy standpoint, we have supported and taken part in projects meant to lead the transformation of the programme, as is the case with the KA2 projects [Erasmus Goes Green](#) and [Green Erasmus](#). On the one hand, the Erasmus Goes Green focus is on finding solutions to reduce the transport-related carbon footprint of students and staff taking part in the Erasmus+ mobility. On the other hand, the Green Erasmus project aims to raise awareness across the European higher education sector about the importance of sustainable internationalisation and to empower students and student organisations to be the agents of change, pushing for improvements on the topic of environmental sustainability. Thus, the two projects are complementary and their results will set the basis towards the Erasmus+ green transition.

The first project results will be published by the end of the first half of 2021 and will reveal the transport-related carbon footprint of the Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020, as well as the habits of the Erasmus+ students during their mobility and good practices that HEIs implement towards the sustainable internationalisation.



Entrepreneurship and innovation hubs

In 2020, the EUF consolidated the knowledge square and fostered collaboration between universities and non-academic actors – big to small-sized companies, NGOs, and public authorities – to enable its member universities to anchor entrepreneurship and innovation in their long-term development strategies via activities and outputs of the [European PhD Hub](#) and [POWER](#).

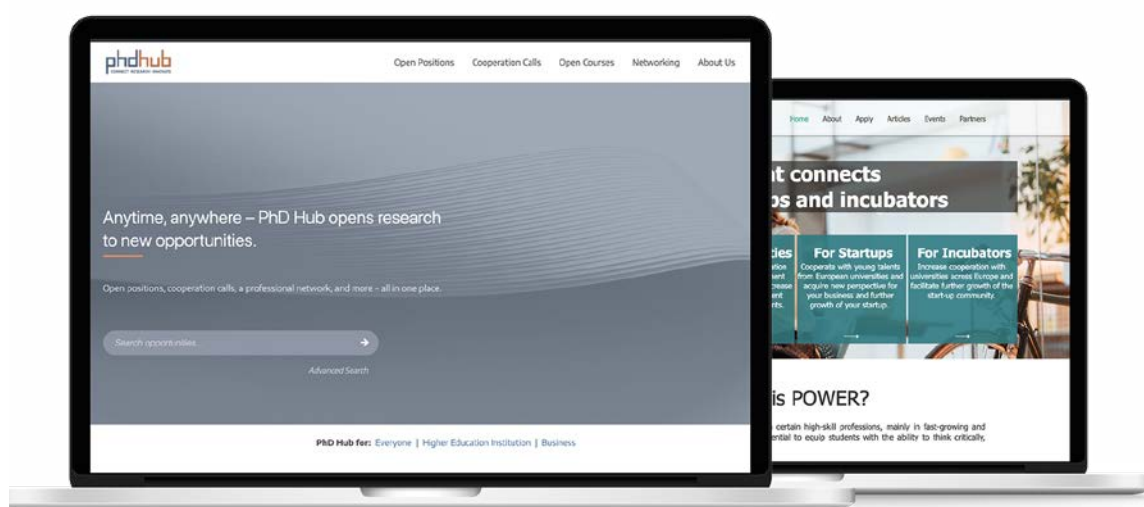
Although Covid-19 in 2020 had a large impact on foreseen university-business cooperation activities, in particular on activities involving cross-border mobility, the work continued and solutions were sought to overcome the limitations that were imposed by the restrictions. We supported collaboration between universities and start-up incubators by exploring possibilities of remote placements and organising thematic online events and webinars to facilitate the exchange of knowledge. We also advanced the work on building the POWER platform to facilitate the placement of students in start-ups.

The next-generation one-stop-shop for research and innovation has also been reinforced with the European PhD Hub releasing an updated version of its online platform and more than doubling the membership of local hubs. The online portal centralises doctoral [open positions](#), [cooperation calls](#) and offers opportunities

for PhD candidates and researchers to connect with (non-)academic partners. The [PhD Hub Hackathon](#) and [European Innovation Fest](#) which were organised in 2020 have been very concrete results of a growing community willing to ensure that doctoral training activities make a substantial contribution to the knowledge intensive society.

“It has been a pleasure to be involved with the EUF community over the last years and rewarding to be part of the visionary developments that have proved critical to aligning strategic (PhD Hub) collaboration for the greater need and innovation growth of universities in Europe.”

Rehan BHANA
Director for Innovative Pedagogy,
Birmingham City University



Supporting professional development opportunities

With the rise of the global pandemic of 2020, the staff members of international relations offices have been put under great pressure to manage new constraints and at the same time understand how the requirements for the administration of mobility programmes can be met in such circumstances. They had to show enviable skills on change, time and stress management and cope with the accelerated demand for digital skills and specialised knowledge on the Erasmus+ programme.

To support the staff members in such trying times, a [digital version](#) of the 'Framework for Erasmus Staff Competences' was published. As the pandemic prevented the organisation of a physical training on Erasmus staff competence development, a [virtual training](#) was organised in December 2020 and January 2021 gathering more than 450 participants. The training consisted of four series of online seminars focusing on how the international staff members can identify and further improve relevant skills and competences, cope with stress, and engage successfully in change management.

To further support the professional development opportunities of academic staff members, the [Teach with Erasmus+](#) consortium has been tackling challenges related to teaching mobility. In 2020, the partners have identified that staff mobility for teaching is often not easily accessible for (especially junior) teaching staff and is also often not embedded in the institutional strategy to the desired extent and therefore not specifically measured. Such opportunities at times lack visibility and transparency, particularly when selecting incoming teaching mobility. In this context researchers of the Eötvös Loránd University have been conducting an international research on the question of How to enhance and facilitate quality in teaching mobility in Europe? focusing on exploring the possible motivational and hindering

“Since I started working as an Erasmus+ Advisor, I became more involved with EUF and jointly provided webinars on Erasmus+ grant applications. With the start of the new Erasmus+ programme these webinars are even more

factors, quality issues and results of teaching mobilities in Europe. As an outcome of the research a [set of tools for institutions and academics](#) was released to aid them in realising high quality teaching mobility opportunities. To share the findings of the research and the tools, the Teach With Erasmus+ consortium organised four training sessions with more than 75 participants (per training).

In parallel, the Erasmus+ Teaching Mobility Platform has been developed by the Teach with Erasmus+ project partners. This brand-new website is akin to a marketplace where academic staff members can offer and find teaching/training opportunities. It provides tools and guidelines about staff mobility, like the Quality and Impact tool for teaching mobility, based on the desk research about the state of the art of teaching mobility in Europe.

Eventually, capacity-building activities sought to facilitate a continuous flow of information about the Erasmus+ programme and cooperation opportunities, which was particularly important in 2020 as it marked a transition year towards the new programming period 2021-2027. The majority of physical trainings and workshops were replaced by a series of webinars/online sessions focusing on particular aspects that were previously tackled by the EUF Open Space. Online events focused on project design and/or project implementation and were complemented by the organisation of the Erasmus+ Project Writing Workshop, which was the only physical training of this sort in 2020 and was hosted by the University of Barcelona providing consortia a common space to elaborate and finalise project proposals. All these activities have resulted in the incubation of a number of new initiatives led by EUF member universities, as well as in the creation of a joint space for sharing/exchanging experience and best practices in the EU project management.

needed. EUF provides relevant content and support and I hope I can contribute further. It's all about knowledge and expertise sharing, and jointly moving forward.”

René **TEUNISSEN**
Academic affairs,
Erasmus University Rotterdam

The University Internationalisation Hub

On the 29th of January 2020, the University of Barcelona and the European University Foundation jointly established a new Internationalisation Hub, through a ceremony where Dr. Joan Elias Garcia, Rector of the University of Barcelona, and João Bacelar, Executive Manager of the EUF, signed a memorandum of understanding.

The Hub is the next step in the evolution of the EUF and will focus on nurturing innovative policies and projects in the domains of smart internationalisation and inclusiveness. Furthermore, it will also double as a focal point in the EUF network for peer learning and training activities.

The launch of the Hub was marked by a networking reception for EUF members, and we were delighted to have colleagues from more than 15 universities attending. A recurrent discussion topic is how having teams based at EUF member universities may, in the future, help us ensure an ever more accurate understanding of the needs

and ambitions of our universities, and reflect them in our policy discussions and proposals. Conversely, the establishment of joint teams such as these will also enable the network to take on more specialised and ambitious initiatives, tapping into the know-how of the network academic community.

We would like to thank the many colleagues at the University of Barcelona who have joined forces to pioneer this novel idea with the EUF, making this landmark moment possible. We are confident that their vision could open new cooperation avenues among the EUF universities and help elevate the impact of the activities of the network.

>> [Launch of the Internationalisation Hub](#)



Resilience in times of COVID-19 pandemic

The year of 2020 will most probably be remembered as a year of accelerated transition towards different modes of learning and teaching, getting used to work from our homes and, in the field of international higher education, maintaining international cooperation and mobility of students and staff in times where physical mobility has been severely restricted.

To help our member universities cope with the enormous challenges they were exposed to, we started organising regular online network meetings from March 2020. The objective of these online network meetings, scheduled on average every three weeks, was very simple: to provide international relation officers and other staff members engaged in internationalisation activities an online forum where they could share problems and solutions and provide each other with updates, advice, and support on how to continue with the international cooperation and mobility activities. The 9 online meetings organised in 2020 proved to be rather popular, with an average number of 40 participants per meeting, and led to changes in the Erasmus+ digitisation roadmap, provided advice to DG EAC on how to best manage the force majeure exceptional rules and inspired the creation of the [COVID-19 mobility dashboard](#), which has attracted a lot of media attention and displayed the mobility status of 1600 institutions.

In parallel, member universities also started two task forces on blended mobility (led by the University of Barcelona) and staff trainings (led by the University of Marburg) to capitalise on the expertise and experience available in the network on these topics and come up with key recommendations on the way forward. In addition, network member universities were also invited to join two working groups led by the EUF with regards to the inclusion aspects pertaining to student mobility and the European Student Card initiative. Both working groups are providing direct input to ongoing projects.

Since March 2020, the EUF staff members have been working remotely, occupying the office spaces only when necessary and allowed by the applicable legislation. They have worked tirelessly to ensure our activities would not be slowed down by these extraordinary circumstances and we are very much looking forward to being able to engage again face-to-face with colleagues from the team and from across the network.

“In times of worldwide pandemic when most universities have been trying to figure their way through the new issues and challenges, EUF immediately stepped up with new formats of cooperation not only in the form of online meetings but also through specific and effective task forces on various topics. As a head of

an International Relation Office and member of said task forces, I have to say that EUF remained the biggest focal point for innovation that pushes the whole European sector forward with fresh ideas and projects.”

Vratislav **KOZÁK**
Director of International Relations
Charles University

BALANCE SHEET IN EUR

ASSETS

	2020	2019
Fixed assets	40 186,21	366,34
<i>Tangible fixed assets</i>	3 183,12	366,34
<i>Financial fixed assets</i>	37 003,09	-
Current assets	1 142 558,43	699 478,34
<i>Receivables</i>	41 897,62	57 453,58
<i>Cash at bank and in hand</i>	1 100 660,81	642 024,76
Accruals	253 387,92	84 382,42
TOTAL	1 436 132,56	784 227,42

LIABILITIES

	2020	2019
Equity	337 219,94	69 998,64
Short-term liabilities	80 131,02	45 612,31
Accruals	1 018 781,60	668 616,47
TOTAL	1 436 132,56	784 227,42

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT IN EUR

	2020	2019
Net revenue	4 160,00	28 560,00
Grants	1 462 289,89	2 012 037,90
External charges	465 449,40	1 420 860,36
Personnel	721 972,01	619 196,25
Depreciation	1 482,22	366,33
Other operating expenses	10 324,99	174,96
Result of the year	267 221,30	-



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