



ECIU SHARES 10 CRITERIA TO MAXIMISE THE IMPACT OF EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES NETWORKS

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10 OUR 10 CRITERIA

Europe needs universities that dare to truly and continuously innovate education and maximise their societal impact. Society is changing fast and societal challenges - and solutions - are not bound by borders. Therefore we need European, student-centred and flexible education. The development of several European Networks of Universities offers an excellent opportunity to bring the best of individual universities within Europe together.

The European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU) has been a closely-knit European network of like-minded universities for over twenty years. It is the leading university consortium of research-intensive universities with a collective emphasis on innovation, creativity and societal impact. The ECIU supports the development of ambitious European Universities Networks by sharing ten recommendations.

1. Ambition.

It is high time that Europe innovates its higher education landscape, to maximise the societal impact of its educational investments and stay internationally competitive in an ever faster developing world. Universities Networks offer an important opportunity to catalyse educational innovations, such as flexible education and European curricula. ECIU members have constantly evolved their role as lifelong educators, their engagement with wider society (e.g. through problem based learning), and responsiveness to developments in society (such as the impact of digitalisation). Bold ideas are shared, tested in different contexts and cultures, and moved to the centre of practice. EU support should accelerate new educational developments, by offering a safe environment for true innovations. The EU should use the momentum to offer Universities Networks the opportunity to experiment with new organisational forms of collaboration, different ways of delivering educational programs, public-private partnerships, quality control, degree awarding, funding and pricing.

2. Knowledge triangle.

European Universities Networks must connect research, education and innovation to maximise their impact. Therefore the relevant EU funds must be pooled and the different programmes need an integrated approach to effectively support these different activities. ECIU members lead by example, having multidisciplinary and competitive education and research teams in place, where students, lecturers, researchers and local ecosystems co-create knowledge and innovation. The close collaboration within the knowledge triangle is essential for disruptive innovations, as shown in the track records of ECIU member universities.

3. Mutual trust.

Mutual trust and commitment are imperative for realising close and sustainable collaborations across academia and support services of universities in order to be able to realise and implement successful joint degrees and diploma recognition. ECIU's existence as a network for similar types of research intensive and entrepreneurial universities for over 20 years has been central to success.

4. Openness to surrounding communities.

To maximise the impact of universities, intensive collaboration with society, public institutions and industry is crucial. These collaborations support regional and global impact, and fuel strong research, education and innovation. The ECIU members have a long tradition of engaging with their local communities. ECIU members engage in novel forms of partnership and connect with society at large to make open innovation flourish, e.g. through the design of campuses focused on co-creation, co-innovation and co-location. This also includes different initiatives in the more disadvantaged parts of ECIU regions.

5. Openness to the world.

Openness to the world is a basic condition for leading universities. Internationalisation brings together shared specialisms, cultural diversity and expertise. Opportunities and innovations are no longer limited to specific markets but happen worldwide. Universities must be globally connected to stimulate global change and development. Openness to the world enables a more efficient and innovative way of educating and thus, of solving scientific or societal questions. Including international partners in Universities Networks helps to foster long-term and sustainable collaborations. Universities Networks can facilitate staff and student physical mobility and exchange, as well as build virtual relationships which impact upon teaching and research. For example, the ECIU has members in Norway and Mexico, which is of great added value to reflect on the specifics of the European Higher education landscape.

6. Open governance structure.

Universities have a strong role in society as a whole. Therefore, the networks need to be in constant dialogue with both society and its own creative minds. This is also why the European Universities Networks could focus on Bsc, Msc, Phd, but should not exclude continuous education. Since the foundation of the universities - all were founded in regions where major industry had declined - the ECIU members are playing a key role for their surrounding industry and society. By working in partnership with students and external stakeholders, and using innovative educational models as problem-based, challenge-based, industry-led and research-based learning, ECIU members help to build lifelong and future-facing learners. Cooperation and communication skills, information literacy, creativity, citizenship and problem solving are essential competencies in the 21st century's education. Therefore, educational programmes need to address the needs of alumni, students, business and university staff.

7. No number fits all.

Although it is important that the number of partners in a network is manageable, this cannot be predefined by a specific number. The ideal number of partners will differ per network and activity. The amount of twelve member universities has worked very well for the ECIU over the last twenty years. This enables it to better map the diversity of Europe in its network, making optimal use of the expertise that is present and provides the students with a broad set of mobile products. The mutual trust and close collaboration in line with the strategic ambitions of the member universities has made it possible to run joint education and research projects with the involvement of all partners.

8. Commitment on different university levels.

To maximise the impact of the network within and outside the universities, the governance structure must ensure effective decision-making processes and combine a top-down with a bottom-up approach to reach the university as a whole and to bring the collaboration on a strategic central level. ECIU has a presidium, board, several steering committees and working groups in place that support its decision-making and action-taking, and realise commitment on multiple levels within the university organisation and academic disciplines. Collaboration could also have a (partly) virtual dimension.

9. Commitment from the member states.

To realise cofunding mechanisms and develop rules and regulations that support the development of European Universities Networks, e.g. on quality assurance, the commitment and involvement of member states is crucial. Regional funds should be opened up as part of the matching. National educational systems and their burdens for cross-European collaboration need to be triggered to make integrated European Universities Networks a reality.

10. Integrated education, research and innovation activities.

European Universities Networks must involve all three university missions (research, education and knowledge transfer). Therefore, it is crucial that EU education, research and innovation funding is combined, so that there is one call for all European Universities Networks-activities. ECIU members have been committed to co-funding the current activities of the consortium. More funds are required to advance to the next level of collaboration and activities.

5 ECIU proposes EU support for the development of 5 actions

1. Mobility.

Short, medium and long term embedded mobility for all students, researchers and staff among the members of the network is crucial for its success. This enables people to be part of the education, research and innovation that best fits their needs. ECIU has several exchange programmes in place, empowering students to pick and choose their own curriculum through a wider selection of pre-defined Minor programs in countries across Europe. Offering exchange programmes for students would not be possible without the already existing support of Erasmus+. EU support for the development of new mobility programmes, the marketing, administrative and IT-support of the programme is of added value, as the development of such programmes request a major investment. ECIU offers a variety of [exchange programmes in English](#) to students, a [Staff Mobility Programme](#), a [Research Mobility Fund](#) and a [MSCA-ITN with a very strong mobility component](#).

2. Collaboration projects.

Small scale “seed” funds for joint research-education-innovation projects between the members of the network are of high added value. These funds can serve as a kick-off platform for large scale knowledge triangle projects. And it leads to theme or discipline based platforms that support the use of shared infrastructures, organisation of workshops and seminars or boost joint projects in strategic research fields. The ECIU runs a [Joint Research Mobility Fund](#) and has a competence mapping that can serve as an example. EU support for the development of new research-education-innovation collaborations is imperative for true institution-wide collaboration.

3. Joint curricula development and execution of Bologna process.

One of the key issues of mobility and cross-border cooperation are many administrative obstacles of studying abroad. As a trusted partnership, Universities Networks are key to developing smooth practices for mutual recognition of earned credits and qualifications. The development of joint curricula, and truly ambitious European educational collaborations, need big investments and commitment to be successful. EU support to kick-start these types of collaborations in a safe environment is very welcome. Through the European Universities Networks, the universities will be able to trigger the educational systems and work jointly on removing administrative and legal obstacles for cross-European collaboration.

4. Training.

Training of students, researchers and staff is an important activity for Universities Networks. The ECIU offers extensive and high-quality training modules to its students, staff and researchers at different member universities, e.g. The [ECIU Leadership Development Programme](#), to contribute to leadership development at participating ECIU universities. Our level of trust enables us to open up the highest management of our universities for the participants of the Leadership training to work on a real-life strategic case, thereby improving the management of our members.

5. Network management.

Network management and administration costs must be funded, as this comes on top of regular university activities. Good management and administration with an international mind-set are essential to make collaboration work (see the ECIU support [staff mobility programme](#)). Funding, especially for support staff for the different stages of establishing the network and also the preparatory work, is crucial for the implementation and success of ambitious and sustainable European partnerships. The ECIU could seriously raise its ambitions, intensify collaboration and increase its added value, if there was more EU support available for its management. Support for a broad set of diverse programmes would enable the ECIU to reach out to all levels of universities across Europe, offering added value to an extended group of students, researchers and innovators.

ABOUT

The European Consortium of Innovative Universities is a consortium of research intensive universities, with collective emphasis on innovation, creativity and societal impact. The member universities have a long track record in university-industry interaction and collaborating within their region. Formed in 1997, the Members form a coalition of the willing, willing to change traditional university culture and methods of working. ECIU looks forward to collaborate with European stakeholders on the nature of a modern, innovative university.

Aalborg University

is ranked as the best European university for engineering.

Dublin City University

is Ireland's University of Enterprise and Ireland's leading university for licensing and innovation partnerships with SMEs and multinational companies.

Hamburg University of Technology

offers one of the top 5 combined Management and Engineering study degree programs in Germany.

Kaunas University of Technology's

return on Investment of business incubator Start-up Space is 600 % - taxes paid by start-ups in 5 years exceed the investment of the KTU 6 times.

Linköping University

is ranked as Sweden's foremost university in terms of societal engagement and impact, having produced the highest number of innovative spinouts in Sweden during the last decade.

Tampere University of Technology

is ranked on the 11th position in the world, and the 4th in Europe for industry collaboration according to THE rankings.

TEC de Monterrey

is on the Top 25 Undergraduate Schools (NO. 14) for the Princeton Review's Top Schools for Entrepreneurship Studies for 2018.

The University of Nottingham

has a £1.1bn economic impact on the UK every year.

The Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

led the UAB-CIE Sphere, comprising of scientific, technological and business parks, multinational companies, SMEs, foundations and city councils.

The University of Aveiro

was designated as best-practice by the National Strategic Reference Framework Observatory, for its close cooperation with the Region.

University of Stavanger

produces more business ideas per researcher than any other university in Norway.

University of Twente

was awarded best technical university and university with the highest impact in the Netherlands.



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