

CO-CREATING ERASMUS+ AND THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

28 & 29 JANUARY 2020, ULB CAMPUS SOLBOSCH BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

A5- European Universities Initiative: Building the universities of the future

Summary of the discussion

More than 60 participants coming from national authorities, national agencies, higher education institutions, students' organisations as well as the European Parliament discussed how the European Universities Initiative will pave the way to the universities of the future.

The Commission and the Executive Agency presented the state of play of the European Universities Initiative as well as the second call for proposals. In addition, representatives from CIVIS and ARQUS (2 of the 17 European Universities selected under the first pilot call), inspired the participants by sharing their long-term visions as well as the activities that will support their implementation. During the discussions, it was highlighted that by combining inclusion and excellence, the European Universities have a key role to play in tackling Europe's unparalleled environmental, technological and societal transitions. In this context, European Universities are not meant to be a project, but an ambitious long-term vision to build the universities of the future.

It was also pointed out that the success will depend on how much the selected European Universities manage, from the very beginning, to involve as many students and staff as possible. This needs to be done at all levels of these institutions, including all faculties, in order to achieve a structural, systemic and sustainable impact. Participants discussed in small groups the key elements of the universities of the future indicating that the current concept of the European Universities Initiative is the way forward.

Main outcomes / operational conclusions

Participants welcomed this ambitious Erasmus+ initiative that has been co-created together with the stakeholders and felt inspired by this forward-looking concept. The higher education community has a lot of expectations from the European Universities as they will act as pioneers, experimenting new approaches to deeper cooperation through inter-university campuses. They will also be confronted to challenges. In this respect, participants insisted that the European Universities community of selected alliances should join their forces to overcome barriers and address challenges at national and European level. Participants suggested amongst others that the European Universities should act as role models and share their outputs in open access for other HEIs to learn from them.

Challenges such as the costs of mobility, different national legislations for the award of degrees, different linguistic approaches and ways to motivate professors to participate to the transformation process were tackled. Potential solutions for these obstacles include the development of blended and virtual mobility, innovative curricula based on student centred learning, the creation of a European degree and strengthening synergies between different EU funding instruments.

Finally, it was pointed out that the support of national authorities to this initiative, their role in removing barriers at national level as well as continuous effort and work at European level will be key in making the European Universities a reality.