

Highlights from EURASHE November 2022 – May 2023

Dear members of the BFUG,

We are providing you with this written update as an extension of the oral update given by our Representatives during the LXXXVI BFUG meeting in Madrid in November 2023.

Introductory words from the EURASHE President Hannes Raffeseder

Dear BFUG Colleagues,

The Bologna Process represents a successful and already established visible form of cooperation that functions in a diverse Europe and is admired around the world. My time as EURASHE President will encompass the Tirana Ministerial Conference, which I very much look forward to attending. While our Vice-President Jon Altuna is with you in Madrid, I hope to participate in the next meeting of the BFUG in Brussels.

EURASHE supports the further strengthening the EHEA and its full implementation by removing the remaining obstacles to mobility and interinstitutional and international cooperation. The role of existing Bologna tools, such as qualification frameworks, ECTS, and European quality assurance and recognition systems, greatly supports those overarching goals. Additionally, recognising what EURASHE stands for and the institutions it represents, we are confident that for the further strengthening of European Higher Education, we need to acknowledge and commit to enhancing the role of applied and professional higher education and its relevance for sustainable regional development and providing educational opportunities for diverse learners. Therefore, even more attention should be paid to the social dimension, stakeholder engagement, the recognition of prior learning and all forms of support for lifelong learners. Considering the vital need for skilled citizens and the existing skill shortages in Europe, we shall support European higher education institutions in

creating stimulating learning environments to develop skills and knowledge for the foreseeable future.

Furthermore, as Europe struggles with labour shortages in many sectors, cooperation between institutions should focus more on strengthening employability among graduates. Strategic partnerships within the EHEA can help create transnational centres of excellence in specific subject areas, contributing to innovation and regional development. The Focus on Employability throughout the Ministerial Communiqués dates to the Yerevan Communiqué. We believe the current world challenges and fast-changing reality of the labour market require even stronger coordination of efforts between the Education and Economic partners.

I look forward to working with all BFUG members, consultative members, and partners of the EHEA in the months and years ahead.

Hannes Raffaseder

EURASHE Strategic priorities

The EURASHE strategy for 2023-2025 aims to make the Association a reference point for a wide range of policymakers and higher education institutions who seek to harness the power of Professional Higher Education (PHE) to address the green and digital transitions. The thematic priorities are shown in the figure below. Three horizontal subjects (Skills, Quality in HE and Applied Research) are complemented by two overarching concerns, namely to promote both local engagement and transnational cooperation.



In 2024 EURASHE will dedicate its Annual Conference to transnational cooperation (see part 4) and build on the momentum of the currently open Call for Erasmus+ Alliances. EURASHE hopes to be an associate partner in the Erasmus+ supported Community of Practice on transnational cooperation that is currently being established. The Bologna Process will also feature heavily in 2024, with EURASHE contributing to the Tirana Ministerial Conference. In addition to co-chairing the BFUG Working Group in Teaching and Learning, EURASHE closely follows the other working groups and has taken part in

several peer learning activities. Finally, EURASHE intends to follow up on its flagship UASiMAP project that finished in the summer. This project has developed an approach to assessing the local and regional impact of applied HEIs. Further use of the framework will be promoted in the coming months.

New Board of EURASHE for the mandate 2023-2025

Since the last BFUG, EURASHE has elected a new Board for a two-year mandate between Spring 2023 and Spring 2025. It is led by Prof. Hannes Raffaseder, CEO of St.Pölten University of Applied Science, and Coordinator of the E³UDRES² European University Alliance.



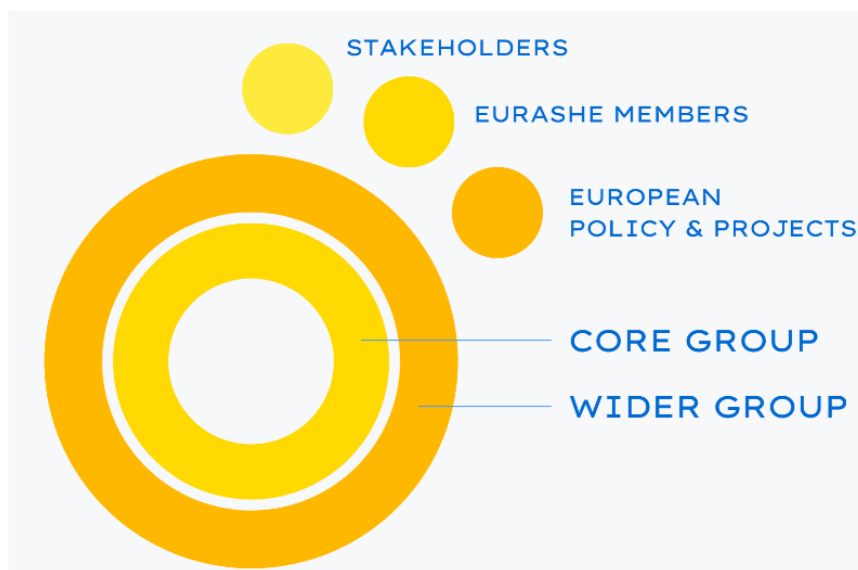
EURASHE Board Members (from Left to Right): Claudia Kreipl (FH Fulda), Ulla Preeden (Tartu Health Care College), Vice-President Jon Altuna (Mondragon University), Vice-President Nijolė Zinkevičienė (Vilnius Kolegija), President Hannes Raffaseder (FH St. Pölten), Luis Loures (Polytechnic University of Portalegre), Valentin Navrapescu (Polytechnic University of Bucharest), Liam Brown (Technological

University of the Shannon), Treasurer Regis Debrulle (Hogeschool Ghent), Pascale De Grootte (AP Hogeschool).

EURASHE Communities of Practice

The EURASHE Communities of Practice were established in 2022 and have been strengthened this year. There are currently three Communities that work on the three horizontal priorities of the 2023-2025 strategy (Skills, Quality of HE and Applied Research), while Communities on transnational cooperation and regional engagement will be launched in 2024.

The Communities of Practice are open to both EURASHE members and non-members, and the structure is illustrated in the figure below. A core group meets more regularly while the wider group benefits from virtual forms of cooperation and information sharing as well as online meetings.



EURASHE invites members of the BFUG to share the following links to join the communities among the higher education community:

- 📌 Join EURASHE Skills Community of Practice [here](#)
- 📌 Join EURASHE Quality Assurance Community of Practice [here](#)
- 📌 Join EURASHE Research Community of Practice [here](#)

EURASHE Annual Conference 2024

On 22-23 May 2024, EURASHE is organising the 33rd edition of its Annual Conference, hosted by the St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences (St. Pölten, Austria) on 22-23 May 2024. The title of the event is “Stronger Together: Fostering Transnational Cooperation in Applied Universities” and builds on the experience of the European Universities Initiative and other examples of deep transnational cooperation among applied higher education institutions.

The event will feature high-level keynote speeches and panel discussions on several topics linked to transnational cooperation, as well as breakout sessions on the EURASHE core themes of applied research, quality assurance, skills, and regional impact. A call for contributions is currently open until 22 December 2023.



EURASHE
33rd ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**STRONGER
TOGETHER**

Fostering Transnational Cooperation
in Applied Universities

EURASHE  | SAVE THE DATE | 22-23 May 2024
St. Pölten, Austria

Highlighted EURASHE Projects

QA FIT

Our key project in the field of QA, the project is conducting a comprehensive mapping exercise of the state of play of internal and external quality assurance in the EHEA, taking a critical look at the ESG and seeing how they have been adapted to different contexts. Explore how quality assurance activities address recent and emerging developments in higher education, including activities that go beyond the focus of the ESG and that use innovative approaches and gather perspectives on the future of quality assurance in the EHEA. In recent weeks, as well as in the upcoming ones around the BFUG meeting in Madrid, EURASHE is organising the focus group meetings with the representatives of the Universities of Applied Sciences better to understand the sectoral specificities in the QA landscape.

Meridies Consortium (2021-2024)

The Consortium MERIDIES (a Latin expression referring to South) brings together a set of Portuguese Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) strongly committed to the development of the territory in which they operate, i.e., the Alentejo region, integrating the Polytechnic of Portalegre (Coordinator), the Polytechnic of Santarém, the Polytechnic of Setúbal, the Polytechnic of Beja and the University of Évora. Based on the characteristics of this territory, the project translates a strong commitment of the HEIs involved with the development of the territory, contributing not only to meet the educational and training needs, but also to retain and attract qualified human resources, in strategic and crucial areas for development, aligned with the objectives inherent to the agendas under the RRF framework. There are three proposed training areas (Digitalisation & New Technologies; Circular Economy & Sustainability; and Renewable Energies & Decarbonisation) equally articulated towards upskilling and reskilling of the young and working population, by issuing micro-credentials. EURASHE's role in this project is mostly to bring the European and international levels, mainly by disseminating the courses and micro-credentials through various communication channels and events.

AIRinVET (2023-2024)

AIRinVET aims to enhance the innovation and competitiveness of the European economy. Our focus is on the critical role of vocational education and training (VET) in research and development (R&D). We will identify VET centers involved in applied research (AR), conduct case studies, and develop tools that will help SMEs engage in applied research.

We will identify VET centers involved in applied research (AR), conduct case studies, and develop tools that will help SMEs engage in applied research. By collaborating with regional innovation agents, we are working towards building a brighter future for R&D. Join us in our efforts to enhance the European economy and promote innovation through VET.

ATHENA (2023-2025)

ATHENA responds fully to one of the main Erasmus+ programme priorities: Inclusion and Diversity. By developing a set of recommendations on integrating accessibility and design for all into the HE curricula, we want to take another step forward in promoting equal opportunities, access and social inclusion of people with disabilities.

The leading principle of Erasmus+ is to address “equal opportunities and access, inclusion, diversity and fairness across all its actions”. ATHENA addresses this objective for one of the most marginalised and excluded groups of the last centuries – people with disabilities. The potential of digital technologies for personalisation and adaptation of interaction opens a unique possibility for people with disabilities.

To exploit the digital potential for equal opportunities and access, inclusion, diversity and fairness across all actions, accessibility must be treated as a basic human right in the digital society.

Recent and Upcoming Events

Apart from the Annual Conference, which remains EURASHE's flagship event, we would like to showcase several other past and upcoming events:

Membership webinar (6 October 2023): an opportunity for members of EURASHE to find out more about the different types of EURASHE membership and how to benefit the most from being a member.

Networking session on the European Universities Initiative (20 October 2023): following the publication of the new call for European university alliances, we held this online session open to members and non-members to better explain the content of the ring and provide examples of successfully established partnerships within our network.

Quality Assurance Community of Practice meeting (26-27 October 2023): we gathered members of the CoP for two days of knowledge and practice exchange around various topics related to quality assurance. The meeting took place in Nicosia, Cyprus.

Workshop organised by the Skills Community of Practice (1 December 2023): we are currently planning for this event to occur in the European Parliament in Brussels. It will give the Skills CoP an opportunity to showcase initiatives and projects contributing to skills development in Europe. The workshop is organised as part of the LLLweek, organized by the Lifelong Learning Platform.