

ERUA charter: common legal framework for double/multiple degrees

Deliverable D.3.2.1.3

January 2022

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1. Introduction

In the European Reform University Alliance's vision of integrated, interdisciplinary and flexible learning pathways, the establishment of joint programmes is an important step. ERUA partners have committed to combine resources and skills to create new educational experiences that will allow students to study the challenges and issues arising in the field of the humanities, social sciences and the arts. According to the 2022 Erasmus+ programme guide, joint programmes are defined as "Higher education (study or research) programmes jointly designed, delivered and fully recognised by two or more higher education institutions." (p.415). In this perspective, the educational offer to be developed by ERUA will vary in format, learning objectives, duration, structure and delivered certificates.

Currently, the alliance implements joint short-term learning formats, such as Travelling Seminars and Intensive Courses, as well as creating joint innovative pedagogical modules, which contribute to the establishment of joint procedures and contacts among partners. Evidently, short-term courses are valuable educational experiences on their own and this is becoming more evident in the current context. As part of the Bologna process to establish the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), Ministers responsible for higher education agreed that the diversification of the learning offer and innovation in mode and delivery is important for Higher Education Institutions.¹ In addition, the European Commission has recognised the importance of learning opportunities of smaller volume by proposing a European approach to micro-credentials that will allow certification of these experiences. As explained in the Commission's proposal, "Micro-credentials enable the targeted, flexible acquisition and recognition of knowledge, skills and competences to meet new and emerging needs in society and labour market."² The role of Higher Education Institutions, and specifically European University Alliances, is highlighted in the exploration of the micro-credential's role.

Thus, it is the alliance's objective to further develop short-term joint programmes, in line with the Commission's priorities, but this first phase will lead to the development of joint study programmes, embedding new teaching and mobility formats accessible to all students of the alliance. Short-term learning experiences will contribute to make ERUA Joint study programmes a more flexible, innovative, multidisciplinary, integrated and creative educational experience.

¹ Rome Ministerial Communiqué of 19.11.2020

² COM(2021) 770 final, p.1

2. What an ERUA joint study programme is

An ERUA joint study programme is a study programme jointly developed by two or more ERUA partners, which aims to rethink curricula through modularity, including short, distance, and multilingual features and combining resources and skills across alliance members and associated partners.

An ERUA joint programme aims to be a creative space where experimental approaches will be used, contributing to enhance the high quality of education.

a. Content

The main characteristics of an ERUA joint programme are a study programme offered in English with integrated student mobility and highly recommended co-supervision of thesis. In order to encourage multilingualism within the alliance, optional courses in the local language may be offered to students to complete their study path, as well as specific language courses in French, German, Greek, Bulgarian and Danish. Specifically at master level, connection with the job market and project-based learning will be enhanced, given the ERUA alliance's distinct identity linked to experimental and innovative teaching methods.

We also anticipate and support the implementation of summer-, fall- and winter schools and joint courses focused on the improvement of transversal skills, for example intercultural awareness, creative thinking, entrepreneurship, problem solving, team work, etc.

Teaching staff exchanges will also be encouraged in a perspective of co-creation and to encourage interdisciplinarity.

b. Experience/ services

The students who will attend an ERUA joint programme will surely have the opportunity to study and socialize in multicultural groups.

Other elements of the student experience and services also considered to implement are integration into community life, extracurricular activities, professional orientation and an alumni network, which will be developed through the alliance's community engagement strategy.

c. Type of delivered degrees

The type of programmes that are currently possible to implement among the alliance's partners are programmes delivering double/multiple degrees. The delivery of joint degrees is also envisioned but legislative obstacles make this less likely for the moment.

Joint programmes are possible to implement at all levels of higher education (bachelor, master and PhD) but our priority is to focus on joint master programmes, as a first step, as they tend to be more easily implemented.

In order to enhance transparency and mutual recognition of the programme, an ERUA diploma supplement, once established, will be issued together with the degree, while a joint certificate, additional to the official degrees, issued by all the involved institutions could be implemented too.

d. Quality standards

ERUA guarantees the quality of ERUA-developed study programmes at a joint high level. To this end, ERUA agrees on certain quality standards that are derived from the ESG and are to apply to all joint study programmes that ERUA develops. These quality standards include the following elements:

Standard	Requirements
The ERUA partners regularly monitor the development of the programme in terms of quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obtain student feedback on a regular basis - External evaluation of the programme
The ERUA partners provide sufficient staff for the programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff for a programme-specific student advisory service - Staff who is responsible for the organisational implementation and further development of the study programme.
The ERUA partners provide an adequate advisory service for the students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support with administrative matters relating to the organisation of studies and examinations - Equal access to advisory service for all students

Standard	Requirements
A study programme concept is available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Description of the study programme and learning outcomes - Admission procedures and requirements - Participation costs and financial support available - Curriculum and mobility scheme - Recognition of academic achievements - Services available to the students - Degree(s) awarded

3. Implementation and Quality Assurance

a. Implementation of new joint programmes/ decision making process

Each partner involved in a new joint programme is responsible for the implementation of the programme in their institution in accordance with applicable national and institutional regulations and procedures.

The proposals for joint programmes are presented to the Work Package 3 Board and the Executive Committee for information.

WP3 will support the conception, design, coordination and administrative development of new joint programmes.

b. Cooperation agreement

In order to establish and implement joint programmes, cooperation agreements signed by the Rectors and the concerned faculty departments of the universities must be put in place.

The agreement outlines all administrative and financial aspects, the cooperation mechanisms among the partners as well as the programme's details

and the pedagogical and academic planning of the joint programme. It also guarantees that the minimum quality standards (defined above), based on the ESG, are applied. The cooperation agreement will cover the following aspects:

- Roles and responsibilities of each partners
- Governance structure including academic and administrative staff
- Legal framework and national qualifications awarded
- The joint curriculum structure
- Cost and financing of the study programme
- Eligibility criteria and student's selection process
- Recognition mechanism (examinations and graduation)
- Mobility of students and staff
- Language policy
- Data protection and rules on the exchange of student data
- Intellectual property rights (if applicable)
- Quality assurance and development processes
- Mechanisms for conflict resolution between cooperation partners

Following the establishment of the charter, WP3 will work on the development of an ERUA cooperation agreement

c. Accreditation

ERUA members have established structures and processes for accrediting the programmes they offer. Moreover, due to national requirements, there is sometimes little possibility to deviate from these individual accreditation processes.

ERUA is committed to close cooperation in accreditation of joint programmes. The ERUA partners acknowledge the added value of a single evaluation and accreditation of joint programmes which would also consider the joint components that are not usually taken into account in national standards. ERUA partners are aware of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG) and the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (EA), and believe in such a common approach as instrumental to build the EHEA. We strive to follow these recommendations and the nine defined standards (eligibility; learning outcomes; study programme; admission and

recognition; learning, teaching and assessment; student support; resources; transparency and documentation; quality assurance) will be addressed through the implementation and evaluation process of ERUA joint programmes.

Where legally possible and efficient, mechanisms of joint accreditation are used. The touchstone for joint accreditation procedures is that the accreditation process should be less burdensome for all parties involved without compromising the quality of the accreditation process. The results of a preliminary feasibility check for a joint accreditation showed that further analysis is needed as the European Approach still requires implementation at national level or is only available under specific conditions in some ERUA countries.

d. Quality Assurance

Each ERUA member guarantees the quality of the study content for which the member is responsible. The results of the quality assurance are made available to the partners on request according to the data protection regulations. In order to avoid duplication in the quality assurance measures of the respective ERUA members, the QA units of the universities closely exchange information and coordinate the individual activities if necessary.

The QA units of each ERUA member collaborate in assessing the quality of the programme together if appropriate. Where possible and advisable, assessment instruments (surveys, evaluations, committees etc.) could be developed and carried out together or one partner could be commissioned to do so. The development and use of these instruments such as a joint QA committee evaluating the joint aspects of the programmes or other joint evaluation instruments, will be decided on a case by case basis to ensure the greatest possible fit with the respective programme.

4. Promotion of joint programmes

In order to enhance the impact and visibility of ERUA joint programmes and their results, internal and external communication and promotion is a strategic element.

The promotion of the programme is the responsibility of all partners, both directly and through their own networks, in order to boost the long-term impact of ERUA.

Each partner agrees to the use of its name and logo for the purposes of promotional material, programme literature, joint initiatives and events, articles and other documentation related to the project.

Annex

Overview of institutional and programme accreditation at ERUA member universities

New Bulgarian University	University of Roskilde	University of the Aegean	University of Konstanz	University of Paris 8
<p>NBU has institutional accreditation provided by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency for a 6-year period, by January 2025.</p> <p>New programs must be internally evaluated and approved by the Quality commission and AC.</p> <p>The government requires accreditation for each "Professional directions" (i.e. 'fields of study') - which are 9 in total - if a university would like to deliver programs in it. Once the application is approved the university can register more programs later on in the Professional direction which will be accredited until the next accredited procedure.</p>	<p>RUC has a conditional institutional accreditation. RUC is in the process of achieving full institutional accreditation, according to the criteria of The Danish Accreditation Institution, by 2022.</p> <p>All new programmes and local provisions of programmes must be externally accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education before they are established.</p>	<p>UoA has institutional accreditation provided by Hellenic Authority for Higher Education in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015).</p> <p>88% of the undergraduate programmes have been accredited as well and the rest will be accredited in 2022.</p> <p>In the following year this procedure will be continued for postgraduate programmes.</p> <p>All new programmes must be accredited by Hellenic Authority for Higher Education</p>	<p>UKON has institutional accreditation and therefore accredits the study programmes itself according to the criteria of the German Accreditation Council and the ESGs. In general, the establishment of new programmes must be approved by the state ministry.</p>	<p>Accreditation is following a periodic evaluation of LMD education (Licence, Master, Doctorat): currently, P8 is in the LMD4 cycle</p>