

EUA Strategic Plan

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Foreword

Universities are integral to Europe's social fabric. As centres of critical thought and knowledge creation, they shape public discourse and the civic spaces we share. Grounded in common values, Europe's universities continually challenge assumptions, expand horizons and support innovation for the common good. In a world marked by constant change, they represent continuity, adaptability and resilience.

Our universities are enriched by the diversity and creativity of their communities. Through curiosity and commitment, institutional leaders, educators, students, researchers and all other members of the university community sustain and strengthen our higher education and research sectors. Since its founding in 2001, the European University Association (EUA) has supported these communities, enabling universities to contribute to science, society and European competitiveness.

2026 marks EUA's 25th anniversary. Over the last quarter century, the Association has grown to represent over 850 members. It has established itself as the voice of Europe's universities, influencing debate and shaping public policy for the benefit of its community. As the Association enters its next chapter, it celebrates its achievements and reaffirms its identity as the most comprehensive body representing universities in Europe.

In a dynamic landscape, EUA's work remains rooted in its vision: strong universities for Europe. This Strategic Plan sets out how the Association will continue to advance that mission with confidence, supporting its community in a shared ambition to build a brighter future.

We would like to thank all those who contributed to the development of the Strategic Plan. The EUA Board, Secretariat and representatives of EUA's collective members (national rectors' conferences) provided valuable input, complementing extensive feedback gathered through a survey that recorded over 500 responses from 318 members and affiliates in 42 countries and a dedicated focus group for individual institutions. We would like to extend our gratitude to all our members who participated in the process, and acknowledge the contribution of EUA's peer and partner organisations. Finally, special thanks go to the members of the Strategic Plan Advisory Board, who oversaw the consultation process and provided consistent and crucial feedback during the drafting stage.



Josep M. Garrell
EUA President



Amanda Crowfoot
EUA Secretary General

Introduction

In 2020, EUA published its first Strategic Plan, [Europe's Universities Shaping the Future](#), outlining the goals, values and principles of the Association. The following year, EUA developed [Universities without walls – A vision for 2030](#) with the aim of guiding and supporting universities in their own strategic development. Since then, universities have experienced dramatic change and their capacity to withstand external pressures has been continuously tested.

The 2030 vision for universities without walls remains a point of reference for the university community. Yet, as universities face new and unpredictable realities, EUA must adapt along with the evolving needs and priorities of its membership, reasserting itself as the voice of Europe's universities.

EUA's Strategic Plan articulates the Association's identity, its guiding commitments and its priority actions. It sets out how the Association works to support its members in realising their individual missions.

The Plan is published during a time of mounting geopolitical tensions and democratic erosion, compounded by heightened security concerns, economic uncertainty and growing civil unrest. It therefore emphasises the essential role of universities in fostering societal cohesion and development and reaffirms EUA's responsibility in enabling this – both as a platform for peer exchange and as a strong advocate for Europe's universities.

EUA's 25-year history has been shaped by its members; its future will continue to be guided by an enduring mission to support them in excelling in service to society.

Our vision

Strong universities for Europe

Our mission

Supporting our members to excel in service to society

Who are we?

EUA's identity

As the most comprehensive organisation representing the higher education and research sector in Europe, **EUA is a decisive advocate for its members**. The scale of its membership gives the Association critical mass and a representative mandate, but also challenges it to:

- ◆ connect universities with distinct profiles, recognise diverse positions and capitalise on commonalities among its community;
- ◆ harness cohesion within the sector to amplify messages, maximise influence and mobilise response from policy actors; and
- ◆ nurture breadth and depth in its policy positions, as an authoritative basis for its advocacy work.

Having established itself as a competent source of information for its members, the wider sector and policy actors, **EUA produces quality resources and delivers original perspectives** by:

- ◆ drawing together wide-ranging expertise from among its community;
- ◆ consolidating evidence across topics into a broad and evolving knowledge-base; and
- ◆ conducting work to explore, anticipate and analyse relevant future trends.

EUA reflects and celebrates plurality within European higher education and research. This diversity leads EUA in its ambition to:

- ◆ promote parity of esteem between university missions;
- ◆ address and, where applicable, link EU, European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and national policies; and
- ◆ understand the both complementary and distinct priorities of the Association's collective members (national rectors' conferences) and individual member universities.

Our identity

**A decisive advocate
for universities**

**Diversity &
representativeness**

**Quality resources &
original perspectives**

What drives our work?

EUA's values and guiding commitments

▶ **EUA supports...**

...its members to realise their own missions. Recognising that universities' everyday environments are shaped by constant evolution, the Association strengthens members' capacity to:

- ◆ operate as adaptive, dynamic and resilient organisations and communities;
- ◆ navigate shifts in the landscape, turning internal and external changes to their advantage; and
- ◆ effect positive change through academic citizenship and student-led initiatives.

▶ **EUA enables...**

...the advancement of education, science and society. Drawing on members' individual strengths and their collective commitment towards the common good, EUA contributes to joint endeavours that:

- ◆ drive innovation, creativity, critical thinking and respectful debate;
- ◆ enable scientific discovery, collaboration and communication; and
- ◆ preserve pluralism, tolerance and democracy.

▶ **EUA fosters...**

...a strong, resilient university sector built on cooperation and shared values. By promoting academic freedom and institutional autonomy as essential for universities to fulfil their societal responsibilities, EUA supports its members in:

- ◆ adhering to fundamental academic values, including integrity and quality;
- ◆ mainstreaming sustainability into their institutional strategies, activities and operations; and
- ◆ adopting equity, diversity and inclusion as a guiding principle across all university missions.

Our values

Quality & excellence

Solidarity

Openness

Academic integrity

Academic freedom

Institutional
autonomy

Equity, diversity
and inclusion

Sustainability

What do we do?

EUA's priorities

Shaping policy

EUA takes a proactive approach to shaping policy discourse in the interest of universities. It aims to impact decisions on public investment in the sector and the regulatory framework in which its members operate by:

- ◆ influencing public debate and policy outcomes, and delivering timely responses to external developments;
- ◆ actively championing European universities' priorities and interests through official fora while maximising informal advocacy channels; and
- ◆ harnessing its convening power to lend weight and visibility to bold, forward-looking statements.

Promoting universities' contribution to society

EUA works to promote and enhance appreciation of universities' individual and collective contributions in society. Representing the sector as a consistent, thoughtful and trusted voice; it:

- ◆ builds trust by affirming the contributions, responsibility and accountability of universities to society;
- ◆ pursues and sustains relationships with organisations from outside the academic sector, nurturing a favourable perception of universities; and
- ◆ engages across European policy domains, ensuring that the university perspective is heard and reflected in broader European policy debates.

Supporting communities within universities

EUA establishes and supports communities across universities, strengthening their readiness to navigate change. Cultivating a spirit of openness and collegiality, it connects university leaders and professionals from across Europe, EUA:

- ◆ develops services and resources for specific communities, enabling exchange between peers;
- ◆ brings emerging and prominent issues at European universities to the fore; and
- ◆ supports members in enhancing their own practices and feeds their experiences into advocacy work.

Connecting members with European policy

EUA works to understand universities' local and national contexts and is active in the EU and EHEA policy spheres, thus helping to bridge the gap between members' priorities and European policy. With and for its members, it:

- ◆ opens and maintains dialogue channels, and connects national and European policies; and
- ◆ translates EU and EHEA-level policies so their impact is understood at national and institutional level, and critically assesses how they benefit or disadvantage universities.

How do we operate?

EUA's ways of working

EUA is reflective and responsive in how it operates. The Association maintains a comprehensive but dynamic portfolio of topics, encompassing all university missions: learning and teaching, research, innovation and culture.

The EUA Secretariat's work is underpinned by openness, professionalism and service that adapts to members' changing needs and priorities. Secretariat-coordinated activities are outlined in annual Operational Plans, which are set in January, approved by the EUA Board and reviewed mid-year. This ensures the Secretariat's yearly work programme stays aligned with EUA's strategic direction and serves members' interests.

► **On (re)setting EUA's agenda**

EUA's strategic priorities are informed by its membership and formally set by its governing bodies, including the Association's collective members that come together in EUA's Council. Offering insights from their national and local contexts, members bring to the fore topics that necessitate a place within EUA's agenda. EUA's approach is characterised by:

- ◆ regular consultation with members – through formal and informal mechanisms – on how EUA can capitalise on opportunities and where it should commit resources;
- ◆ flexibility to refocus or adapt to accommodate newly emerging priorities; and
- ◆ continuity of topics that are integral to its work.

Our key topics

**Higher education
policy and practice**

**Research &
innovation policy
and practice**

Doctoral education

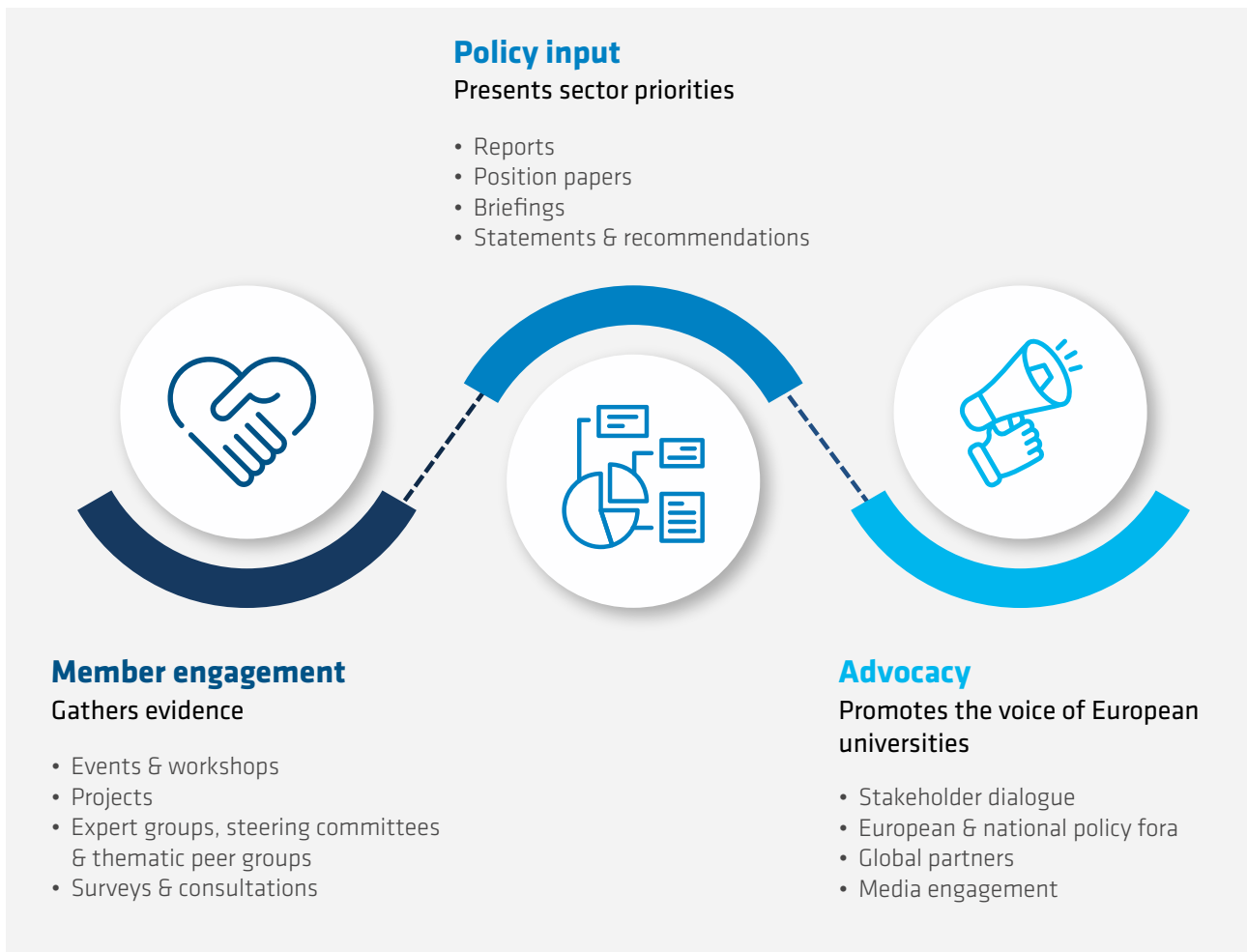
**Governance &
funding**

**Institutional
development**

► On advocacy and representation

The engagement of members in EUA activities is central to producing the Association's knowledge and resources; these resources offer support and guidance for universities while simultaneously providing an evidence base for EUA's advocacy work.

By facilitating connection among members and the flow of information between universities and policy makers, EUA ensures that the sector's voice is accurately represented and that members can engage with relevant policy debates and developments.



EUA strives for representativeness in presenting the sector's views. Its expert groups, event programmes and publications reflect the plurality of Europe's university sector, and are enriched by members' diverse profiles and experiences. Upholding this balance of perspectives, EUA complements leadership-specific activities with services designed for other members of the wider university community. The Association works to ensure all members – whether new or established – engage with and benefit from its services.

► On building connection and community

EUA creates inclusive spaces and networks where members exchange experiences, perspectives and priorities. Through mutual understanding, collaboration and joint action, EUA works with its members to:

- ◆ deliver activities and outputs that benefit the wider sector;
- ◆ cultivate shared ownership of the Association's mission and agenda; and
- ◆ champion the Association among members' immediate and wider communities.

► On communication and partnership

EUA confidently puts forwards the voice of the sector; its advocacy work is reinforced by:

- ◆ strong evidence, based on member consultations;
- ◆ foresight and trends analysis;
- ◆ impactful, well-timed reactions and communication campaigns underpinned by clear, confident messaging;
- ◆ joint initiatives with peer association where these strengthen EUA's messages; and
- ◆ global partnerships that bring a unique dimension to EUA's work, and enable the Association to act as a bridge to the university sector in other world regions.

Members of the Strategic Plan Advisory Board

- ◆ **Josep M. Garrell**, President of EUA (Chair)
- ◆ **Caspar van den Berg**, President of Universities of the Netherlands and EUA Council member
- ◆ **Amanda Crowfoot**, Secretary General of EUA
- ◆ **Jens-Peter Gaul**, Secretary General of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK)
- ◆ **Eeva Leinonen**, President of Maynooth University, Ireland
- ◆ **Ivanka Popović**, former Rector of the University of Belgrade, Serbia, and EUA Board member
- ◆ **Maurizio Tira**, former Rector of the University of Brescia, Italy, and EUA Board member
- ◆ **Sunniva Whittaker**, Rector of the University of Agder, Norway, and EUA Board member

As the voice of Europe's universities, the European University Association (EUA) is the most comprehensive organisation representing the higher education and research sector in Europe.

For more information on EUA's policy advocacy, flagship conferences, webinars, publications, membership services and more, visit the EUA website and sign up for our monthly newsletter.

www.eua.eu

