EPICUR
EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

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ANNUAL REPORT

Université de Strasbourg

Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań

University of Amsterdam

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

KIT Karlsruhe Institute of Technology

BOKU University

universität freiburg

Université Haute-Alsace

SDU University of Southern Denmark

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EPICUR

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

EDITORIAL

Michel Deneken, President of the EPICUR Alliance (2019 - 2025)

Europe is central to our partner universities and therefore one of the EPICUR alliance's major ambitions is to build the Europe of tomorrow. Bringing together nine complimentary and diverse partner institutions is not a simple task, and it involves various levels of discussion and decision-making. Drawing inspiration from the European Union, EPICUR's actions are evolving and moving forward through the consensus of all partners. Indeed, democracy is at the heart of Europe, and therefore it is at the heart of EPICUR. It is important to note that rectors, vice-rectors, and project managers are not the only ones making decisions. From the very beginning, the alliance has been very receptive to the opinion of students: they are the future of Europe, the committed citizens of tomorrow. As a result, the EPICUR Student Board (SB) has been - and still is - an essential advisory body of EPICUR. It has been complimented by the Early Career Researchers Board (ECRB), which represents the interests of young researchers. These two boards drive us, the governance, to improve EPICUR's offering and make it our duty to ensure the success of the alliance.

From day one, EPICUR has been progress on different topics, many of which have met with real success: the multilingualism policy, the creation of the EPICUR Inter-University Campus, which is a fully independent and operational system, sustainability, support for interdisciplinary research projects. One of the major challenges we face now is achieving the long-term goal of becoming a federation of European universities. In my opinion, finding a way to fully integrate its universities, to become a superstructure that would give EPICUR real legitimacy should be an alliance objective. It is not an easy road, but I am sure that with dialogue and consensus, we will succeed. Moreover, the EPICUR alliance will have to make an important decision in the future: deepen the experience with current partners, or widen by opening itself up to new ones? Fellow alliances do both, and soon EPICUR will have to decide. However whatever is decided, I am certain that the alliance has a bright future ahead if it.

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MOBILITY, TEACHING & LEARNING

EPICUR's main goal and vision is to equip its students and educators with truly European skills, enabling them to thrive in a globalised, interconnected, and complex world. The Alliance has pioneered the development of a joint inter-university campus, constructed around the concept of flipped mobility. This innovative approach encourages and facilitates collaborative and cooperative teaching and learning among EPICUR partners, whilst also enabling mobility opportunities for students and educators alike. With its transnational dimension, EPICUR breaks down barriers to learning, expanding access of all students to intercultural, international, inclusive, interdisciplinary, interactive and innovative learning experiences.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR ALL

EPICUR places education at its core, envisioning a collaborative effort to shape a sustainable, peaceful, and healthy European future. By offering new generations of talented students and learners the chance to engage in unbounded European learning experiences.

64 courses from various study programmes across all nine EPICUR universities are featured in the EPICUR open learning experience portfolio. It has been expanded since the EPICUR pilot phase to include several new and alternative collaborative formats centred around five EPICUR key Priority Areas: European Values, Sustainable Transformation, Global Health, Future Intelligence, and Transversal Skills.

The portfolio includes existing courses that have been transformed, like University of Freiburg's (UFR) online "English Academic Writing" and "Scrum Framework" (University of Haute Alsace - UHA / Online), to allow for accessibility and collaboration across institutions and courses designed specifically for EPICUR deployment, such as the challenge-based EPIC Missions, allowing students to work on real-world societal issues in interdisciplinary teams.

A new EPICUR focus is integrated learning experiences drawing on multilateral collaboration across institutions. Piloting has begun in recognised elective courses (e.g., course equivalencies mapped to existing study programme requirements), integrated learning pathways (i.e., a pathway embedded into articulated study programmes), and opening up low threshold activities (e.g., guest lectures, joint sessions, field trips), Examples include joint field trips like the "The Return of the Nineteenth Century" Winter School and virtual exchanges, such as a UHA/ Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań (AMU) collaboration on digital collaboration and intercultural communication.

A dedicated Summer offer, provides opportunities for mobility windows within staggered semester schedules for intensive, in-person mobility, usually lasting between one and three weeks. Students travel to the host university to focus on one topic for several days, interacting face-to-face with their fellow peers and educators. The 2024 summer opportunities included a range of courses hosted by the University of Southern Denmark (SDU), Dutch language courses by the University of Amsterdam (UvA), and an Entrepreneurship Summer School organised by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTh) and coordinated by Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT).

Established in 2023-24, the EPICUR's educational offer has a specific focus on International Values (the '6 Is'). All EPICUR learning experiences have an international focus capable of delivering an innovative mobility experience while incorporating the following attributes:

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Launch of the EPiC TLC

The EPICUR Centre for International Teaching and Learning (EPiC TLC) was successfully launched as a central service unit for teaching and teaching staff across the EPICUR alliance on 23rd February 2024. More than 185 participants from all nine EPICUR partner institutions joined this event online and the EPiC TLC has quickly become a key resource for supporting cross-institutional collaboration in EPICUR education.

The EPiC TLC is designed to foster educational innovation, internationalisation, and professional development through an online-platform, events, and trainings. The opening included perspectives from stakeholders and a virtual tour of the EPiC TLC. A simultaneous ribbon-cutting ceremony at all partner universities marked the official start of the Centre's activities, inviting participants to engage with the platform and its possibilities for collaboration, inspiration, and the exchange of teaching resources. The event concluded with the first EPiC EduTalk of 2024 featuring Steven Randall's (University College Freiburg) introduction of the EPICUR course "Collaboration Across Cultures" and a subsequent discussion of the course features with the audience.

As a vibrant hub for driving educational innovation across EPICUR, facilitating collaboration and professional development for teaching staff throughout the alliance, the EPiC TLC launch marks a significant step forward in supporting digital competence and international teaching excellence.

Making European Lifelong learning a reality

In its idea to offer a European learning and academic training experience to all, EPICUR is preparing the piloting of a joint Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC). The Centre will serve as a gateway to the alliance-level lifelong learning offerings and as a resource platform with links to various lifelong learning-related resources. It will serve as the primary host of several modules, programmes and activities developed within the EPICUR-SHAPE-IT project and will include a catalogue of institutional and joint offerings. The joint Centre is expected to open in the 2025-2026 academic year.

FOCI

Participation in the pilot policy experimentation on the European Degree (Label)

Three EPICUR partners (University of Strasbourg (Unistra), AUTH and UvA) participated in the project entitled "Future-proof Criteria for Innovative European Education – FOCI", part of the European Degree (Label) pilot experimentation call, which successfully ended in April 2024. The project's main results were presented at a joint event held in Brussels, organised by the European Commission and the six projects that experimented the European degree (label) concept, as well as the four projects that experimented a legal status for European university alliances.

FOCI's activities focused on two axes: an analysis of the criteria for obtaining the European degree, based on a stakeholders needs analysis, a legal analysis, and a pilot test evaluation of existing joint programmes; recommendations based on these three different analyses.

The FOCI project's outputs contributed to the global revision of the criteria that are now part of the Higher Education Package, presented by former Commissioner Ivanova on 27th March 2024, and the FOCI public deliverables, along with the final recommendations, are available on the website.

DIGITALISATION

EPICUR's vision is to offer unique opportunities to students and staff to participate in new ways of learning via innovative types of mobilities and course offerings. Those enhance the educational experience shaping the future European citizens.
High-quality digital services and tools play a crucial role in this mission. As such, EPICUR is tightly connected to digitalisation, and this is demonstrated through the tangible results that have been produced such far.

Standardisation and Interoperability: EPICURUS v.1

At the end of its pilot phase, the EPICUR Alliance had successfully developed a flexible digital learning ecosystem: the EPICUR Inter-University Campus (EIUC). This ecosystem integrates: the Virtual University Registrar System (VURS), a Centralised Campus Management System, the Virtual Campus Learning Platform (VCLP), and the Learning Management System (LMS). A decentralised LMS server acts as a gateway to partners' corresponding LMS's completes the set-up. All partners can log in via their respective institutional account, which allows a series of administrative processes to take place digitally, as well as functionalities that enable other key aspects of the educational landscape: course recognition and the support of various forms of mobilities for example.

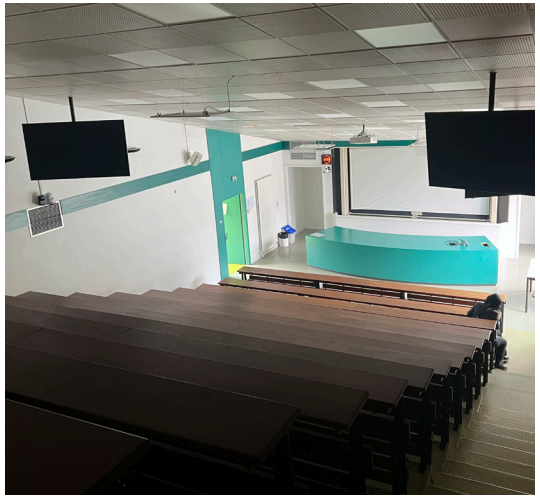
This was further developed and, to a degree, standardised during the current phase (2022-2026) of EPICUR, and has led to the development of the EPICURUS v.1 ecosystem, which aims to enhance digitalisation across partner universities, focusing on supporting a seamless, interconnected educational environment.

The EPICURUS 1.0 ecosystem enables efficient data exchange, facilitating shared access to course catalogues, student records, and internship opportunities. As such, it acts as a comprehensive digital infrastructure for all activities connected to the EPICUR Alliance. In accordance with the need for the achievement of a standardised approach on key activities that take place on the platform, VURS is currently supporting MyAcademicID for the identification of students, the European Learning Model (ELM) for obtaining data on Learning Opportunities (courses, learning pathways) uniformly, and interoperability with CMS and LMS via a rich API compatible with 1EdTech's OneRoster standard, CampusConnect and other interfaces. This decentralised server further highlights the enhanced flexibility of the system, making it an exceptionally powerful tool for supporting current and future educational activities.

EPICUR Hybrid Classrooms Specifications and Network to enable innovative international mobilities

In its quest to deliver new and improved mobility formats to all learners, EPICUR has elaborated Hybrid Classrooms Specifications to provide a solid basis for all partners in the EPICUR alliance to develop a network of harmonised hybrid classrooms. This is a step forward for opening up mobility opportunities to learners who otherwise may not benefit from international experiences, as by deploying this network, EPICUR is setting a new standard for hybrid learning and mobility experiences. Through a comprehensive, actionable approach for developing hybrid and blended teaching formats that covers pedagogical and didactical factors as well as the technical specifications, EPICUR aims at offering all learners a harmonised learning experience, while leaving room for flexibility to implement the hybrid classroom formats in line with institutional or local guidelines and regulations.

The hybrid classroom facilities are available at the majority of EPICUR universities. A concrete example of institutional transformation at local level includes recent developments at University of Haute Alsace (UHA): UHA is one of the partners who implemented such a classroom, the first EPICUR Hybrid Classroom being installed in one of UHA's engineering schools (ENSCMu).



RESEARCH AND TRANSFER

For the EPICUR Alliance, research and innovation are two cornerstones of the "knowledge quadrangle", together with teaching and transfer to society. EPICUR fosters synergies between those dimensions, such as including necessary teaching activities in our newly set up EPICUR Seed Funding for research. With the upcoming EPICUR Hubs, EPICUR will continue this undertaking with new formats and tools.

EPICUR: Advancing Research and Collaboration in Europe

EPICUR-Research, a 44-month initiative funded by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 programme, sets new benchmarks for research collaboration across European institutions. Launched in January 2021 and coordinated by the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, the project focused on developing a long-term research strategy and fostering innovative cooperation within its consortium of partner universities.

Central to its achievements are several formats and tools aimed at enhancing research ecosystems: the Early Career Researchers (ECR) Board; Pathway to Research; EPICluster; EPICommunity; EPIQAssess; and EPIConnect. Collectively, these initiatives provide a prototype for standardised operational practices that could be scaled across alliances through the Community of Practice FOREU4All.

Key accomplishments include the creation of the **EPICommunity** platform, which supports researcher collaboration through profile matching and networking based on **EPIQAssess**, an assessment framework, which redefines how research institutions recognise and reward researchers. Building on this, **EPIGame** incorporates gamification to further engage researchers and institutions in adopting innovative evaluation models.

Another significant development is the establishment of **EPIClusters**, a flexible mobility programme enabling joint collaborative inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary research for early-career researchers across the alliance. This initiative included funding for meetings, travel, and expert collaboration. Additionally, the proposal for **EPIMove** outlines a framework to enhance researcher mobility within and beyond EPICUR, benefiting the broader research community.

EPICUR-Research's achievements underline its commitment to fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, supporting early-career researchers, and addressing pressing societal challenges. By establishing sustainable practices and innovative frameworks, the alliance strengthens its vision of a unified European research and education area, shaping future change-makers equipped to navigate societal transitions.

Focus on EPIClusters: an innovative mobility programme for Early Career Researchers

The EPICluster Mobility Programme, coordinated by the University of Strasbourg in France, was designed to support early career researchers in putting new ideas into action, by providing a collaborative international project format that enables research on scientific and societal challenges to be tackled through cooperation between researchers and professionals outside of academia. The scheme was successfully piloted by the EPICUR-Research project between 2022 and 2024. The programme allowed Early Career Researchers to forge a substantive experience in cross-national collaborative research, and to gain and reinforce essential research skills necessary for their future scientific careers. As part of a step-wise approach to research collaboration between members of the alliance, the EPICluster programme trained early career researchers to work in international knowledge-based teams that could be reinforced in future alliance activities.

The 4 funded EPICluster projects focused on the following societal challenges:

Co-Constructed early warning system against Tomato leafminer: a novel sensor-based solution to provide an early warning system for tomato leafminer (Tuta absoluta), which is a costly pest for farmers in Europe.

ePICnutrients: a collaborative framework for scientists from various fields to develop an innovative fertilizer using raw waste materials. scientific collaboration.

Seeking a new language: aims to identify the Ukrainian youth's primary modes of narrating migration and the processes of settling in urban communities.

A sustainable and just renewable energy transition for Europe: an explorative combination of methods to identify the expected social and ecological impacts and the main sources of concern towards renewable energy transition.

EPICUR Hubs for research-oriented teaching and learning

EPICUR partner universities have worked closely together through a co-creation process over the past two years to develop the concept and action plan for the EPICUR Hubs. These primarily virtual centres are designed to foster transnational academic and research collaboration, and strive to integrate research activities and research-oriented teaching and learning as core elements of the EPICUR Alliance. Focusing on research training, professional development and networking, interdisciplinary and cross-institutional engagement and intersectoral exchange, the Hubs will provide an interactive environment for Master's students and Early Career Researchers (ECRs) to gain critical skills for pursuing successful research careers both in academia and other sectors. The EPICUR Hubs are expected to launch in April 2025 with an inaugural kick-off event.

Key Features of the EPICUR Hubs:

- **Virtual, Hybrid, and Onsite Activities:** the Hubs will offer a mix of courses, workshops, networking events and conferences. All offerings will be featured on a designated Hubs virtual space, which will also feature a Research Opportunities Portal.
- **Thematic Areas:** 4 thematic Hubs will address EPICUR's initial priority areas, starting with the Sustainable Transformation Hub. This pilot, running from April 2025 to June 2026, will include a research and networking conference at KIT in October 2025.
- **Transversal & Research Skills:** training in areas like science communication, grant writing, Citizen Science, and entrepreneurship will complement thematic offerings.

SOCIETAL ENGAGEMENT

EPICUR values connecting citizens, society and science at the alliance and inter-alliance levels. EPICUR therefore commits to actions that engage citizens across Europe and thereby increase their understanding of the global challenges that unite us across the continent.

European Student Assembly

The European Student Assembly (ESA) is a flagship project of the European Universities Community (EUC). In 2024, Unistra led the organisation of #ESA24. Taking place in April 2024 at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, #ESA24 offered a platform for students of all academic levels, various fields of study and from all over Europe, to express their views on the challenges facing Europe. The event gathered 250 students from 41 European Universities Alliances to discuss 11 different topics, leading to the drafting of 79 recommendations related to EU's strategic autonomy. As the recommendations were presented, discussed, and amended during the event, students experienced a genuine democratic exercise by voting on each recommendation. The final recommendations are disseminated to European decision-makers (MEPs, European Commissioners, Directorates-General of the European Commission) and will serve to fuel citizen debates. 10 EPICUR students took part in this third edition.

European university alliances alongside Ukrainian universities

The University of Strasbourg hosted on 13th March 2024 the event **"Cooperation between European and Ukrainian universities"**, in collaboration with the Adam Mickiewicz University, under the patronage and with the participation of Ewa Kopacz, Vice-President of the European Parliament.

15 rectors of Ukrainian universities came to Strasbourg to discuss their future, collaboration with certain alliances and universities in Europe, and to share information on how universities try to continue to work in times of war. The Ukrainian Deputy Minister of Education, members of the European Commission (DG NEAR and DG EAC), the Rector of the University of Poznan, the President of the University of Strasbourg and representatives of European University Alliances also took part in the event. Five of these alliances (Euniwell, Sea-EU, EC2U, Enhance and Civis) presented examples of the good practice they are implementing to help Ukrainian universities. Marked with the desire to establish institutional partnerships between European and Ukrainian university networks, a declaration of strategic partnership was adopted by all parties. This declaration invites the European Commission to provide financial support to the European University Alliances and other European higher education establishments already involved in cooperation and assistance to Ukrainian universities.

GOVERNANCE

EPICUR remains committed to achieve long term institutional collaboration as a federation of universities and structural transformation. The alliance has transitioned from the pilot conception first phase to the second phase of institutionalisation, which is implemented through the EPICUR-SHAPE-IT project.

Towards embedded governance

EPICUR remains committed to its step-wise approach to achieve long-term institutional collaboration and structural transformation through its three-phase governance development roadmap. During the 2023-24 academic year, EPICUR has continued to deepen and broaden its governance structures through establishing three main divisions: strategic governance, operational governance, and advisory groups. The whole governance organisation is coordinated and supported by the Alliance Coordination Office, acting as a facilitator and support structure. With the objective of stabilising Alliance cooperation to guarantee its continuous existence after the end of contractual projects, EPICUR strives to embed the alliance within each partner institution. On the strategic level, the governance aims to mirror existing university governance structures in order to enable the participation of key institutional elected representatives and high-level executive staff. On the operational level, the creation of institutional coordinators with full knowledge of their institution facilitates cross-alliance coordination and ensures institutional engagement. The advisory groups are consultative structures that ensure that internal and external stakeholder positions are considered in the preparation of alliance-level strategies and policies. Current key advisory groups are the Student Board and the ECR Board.
In order to avoid conflict of interest and to ensure proper checks and balances in the preparation of decision, members of the operational governance cannot represent their institution in the strategic governance.

Focus on the strategic governance

The three levels of the strategic governance work in synergy and decisions and actions flow freely between the different levels, with the Management Board holding the pivotal position between the different structures. The Executive Board takes the ultimate alliance strategic decisions. The Management Board has the role of preparing the strategic decisions for the Executive Board with the strategic support of the specialised thematic committees. The Management Board also takes the final responsibility in terms of execution, administration and financial management of common third-party project contracts. The thematic committees are tasked with preparing and giving advice on strategic decisions for the Executive Board or Management Board to approve.

EPICUR thematic committees

2023-24 marked the launch of 4 EPICUR thematic committees: Education, Digital Strategy, Mobility, and Research & Transfer. With the aim of reinforcing institutionalisation and a view to streamlining the strategical approaches of the partner universities with the alliance, the different committees worked over the year during in-person and online meetings on several key topics:

Education committee

EPICUR education policy, joint education approaches, and potential EPICUR joint degrees.

Digital Strategy committee

Interoperability and exploitation of the EPICUR Inter-University-Campus.

Research & Transfer committee

Expertise on the Graduate Hubs and the EPICUR Seed funding call.

Mobility Strategy committee

Institutional mobility needs to improve EPICUR's mobility offer and demand.

Executive Board in Amsterdam

On 3rd and 4th November 2023, the University of Amsterdam hosted the EPICUR Executive and Management Boards for a two-day strategy workshop primarily focusing on the alignment of future institutional strategies. The overarching objective of this exercise was to further enhance the attractiveness of EPICUR's Educational and Mobility offer going forward.

Governance Week 2023-24 in Vienna

March 2024 signalled the launch of the first EPICUR Governance Week in Vienna (19-22 March 2024). As a strong symbol of EPICUR's first steps towards institutionalisation, the members of the Executive Board, Management Board and the fours thematic committees as well as the work package leaders, took part in 3 intense days of meetings. Within their specific areas, these 60+ participants defined a certain number of strategic working axes to be developed together on an alliance-level over the coming 8 months by the specialised committees or the operational work packages.

Associated Partners

EPICUR, as other European University Alliances, cooperates with Associated Partners to enlarge its dissemination possibilities and to work on commonly identified topics of interest. Currently, EPICUR has six Associated Partners who are regularly invited to EPICUR events: **Black Sea University Network, ICA-Casee, Eucor-the European Campus, ESN, ECOLAS and the Assembly of European Regions.** Cooperation with Associated Partners follows a work plan based on a common partnership agreement. The most evolved associated partnership takes place with Eucor, enabling its member the University of Basel to cultivate common teaching and learning formats with EPICUR partner universities within a bilateral setting.

Student Board

The Student Board set ambitious goals for the 2023-24 academic year to enhance external communication via policy statements and participation in European-level events. These priorities were set at the October 2023 Strasbourg Board meeting, where a new Executive Committee was elected and held a workshop with the Digital Strategy Team and students, focusing on student interaction within the digital EPICUR space. Progress was made on student engagement and inclusion in two Odense workshops in the Spring 2024, producing revisions of their Charter and Vision to address engagement and participation barriers. The Student Board participated in all Executive and Management Board meetings, the Governance Week in Vienna, and thematic committee participation was consistant.

Early Career Researchers Board

The EPICUR Early Career Researchers (ECR) Board focused 2023-24 on advancing ECR career development within and outside higher education. Through monthly meetings, the Board provided valuable feedback to the EPICUR-SHAPE-IT and EPICUR-Research projects and contributed to governance processes through participation in strategic governance meetings, ensuring ECR perspectives were included in decision-making. Two in-person ECRB meetings were held in Poznan (AMU) and Odense (SDU), complemented by workshops to support the EPICUR Hub development within EPICUR-SHAPE-IT. The Board also developed a comprehensive Terms of Reference document, defining its roles, expectations, and objectives to strengthen ECR engagement within and beyond the Alliance.

HOW IS EPICUR CHANGING YOUR UNIVERSITY?

AMU

The Alliance's main impact on AMU is through the day-to-day collaboration between researchers - teachers - students - administrative staff by providing new opportunities to develop a modern, intercultural, green and digital university able to face the challenges of the future. This includes new mobility formats available for every member of the academic community, new possibilities for interdisciplinary and cross-cultural collaboration in education and research areas and support with and for digital transformation. AMU's educational offer is enlarging from year to year, as more and more teachers and staff from different AMU Faculties join the collaboration on the EPICUR educational offerings.

UVA

Since the foundations put in place during EPICUR's pilot phase, progress has continued with the institutionalisation of EPICUR across UvA. As such, the Executive Board is fully committed in advocating EPICUR as a strategic vehicle for broadening participation in student mobility. This is also permeating through at faculty level, with increased recognition of the added value of EPICUR's shorter term non-traditional mobilities.

BOKU

The collaboration within EPICUR and the need for flexible solutions has resulted in a pilot to allow online admission for exchange students, therefore breaking barriers and fostering international mobilities. The EPICUR alliance and its ambitions are a corner stone for BOKU's future development and are therefore anchored in the universities long-term strategy. Through the engagement of BOKU's administrative and partly its teaching staff, EPICUR has already been embedded in most of the support structures of the universities. With the Hybrid Classroom, which is being implemented this semester, EPICUR will also contribute to innovation in teaching, thereby fostering internationalisation in education and beyond.

KIT

EPICUR was decisive in starting to frame a KIT position towards topics such as microcredentials, and European degrees. Incoming and outgoing students needs have been systematically collected in order to start a new internal strategic project to take care of them. KIT's rulebook for online exams was revised and now includes EPICUR requirements. The Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) study course that originates from the pilot EPICUR project was formally accepted within the KIT department council. For the first time at KIT, a study course was described using major and minor tracks.

UNISTRA

Considerable work was undertaken to strengthen institutional anchoring of EPICUR through ensuring vice-presidency representation in the key alliance mission areas, and building relays to the central EPICUR team. Future steps include increasing the involvement of faculties and support services in line with the university's international policy. Unistra is particularly committed in the development of horizontal courses and in the development of joint Master Degree programme prototypes.

UFR

EPICUR supports UFR's objectives of internationalisation, societal engagement and quality teaching. EPICUR's challenge-based and transversal learning offers are aligned with UFR's commitment to developing educational experiences that foster societal engagement and mobility as well as the development of cross-disciplinary competencies. The integration of EPICUR-courses into study programmes leads to a more intercultural, international, interdisciplinary, innovative and inclusive education.
The emerging UFR-led EPICUR Centre for International Teaching and Learning (EPiC TLC) is already showing promising results as a hub for teaching collaboration, creativity and adaptability. The EPiC TLC and the EPICUR Inter-University Campus help to advance UFR's efforts to digitise and internationalise teaching for a more European learning experience.

UHA

The 2023-2024 academic year marked significant progress in the integration of EPICUR into UHA's daily operations. Key developments include the stabilisation of dedicated staff for the EPICUR-SHAPE-IT phase, the alignment of EPICUR with the institution's "NCU ELAN" pedagogy, "Mathlight 4.0" scientific excellence and "DemoUHA" digital transformation projects, and the inclusion of EPICUR as a core internationalisation strategy in UHA's 2024-2028 multi-year plan. In addition, the EPICUR training offer has been integrated into student curricula for the 2024-2028 accreditation, offering increased opportunities for personalised pathways, flexible modalities and automatic ECTS recognition for eligible students.

SDU

EPICUR continues to act as a driving force for internationalisation at SDU, with a particular focus this year on curriculum development. Through collaboration with the alliance, SDU had the opportunity to create new interdisciplinary courses that cater to both students and researchers across borders. This process has led SDU to evaluate and reconsider some of its own courses and study programmes, ensuring they are of high quality and relevant in a global context. EPICUR further enhances internationalisation at SDU as we integrate new teaching methods, with the alliance's partnerships strengthening both our educational offerings and research efforts.

AUTH

AUTh supports the goal of institutionalising EPICUR through the constant involvement of high-level stakeholders in all activities and units. This tightly correlates with and demonstrates the project's effect on serving and enabling some of the key strategic goals of the institution, particularly regarding internationalisation, as well as the digitalisation of its' services. During the past academic year, AUTh offered over 800 EPICUR course spots to its students. Additionally, EPICUR assisted the academic's staff involvement in mobilities and international collaboration, by supporting students from other academic institutions to participate in more than 50 courses.

COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION

The communication and dissemination activities of EPICUR are designed both to ensure the success of the alliance internally, through giving regular information to local communities, and externally. Through the promotion of our project progresses and overall successes of EPICUR alliance to a European and international public, our colleagues participate in dissemination actions and enhance EPICUR's influence within European Higher Education Area.

Building the European Research Area: SwafS cross-alliances Forum

EPICUR joined 37 other alliances to discuss the achievements and future of Research and Innovation (R&I) within European Universities Alliances at the **"Science with and for Society in European Universities Alliances: Cross-Alliances Forum"** held on 30th November to 1st December 2023, at the Université libre de Bruxelles in Brussels. The forum served as a platform to commemorate the achievements of completed and ongoing R&I projects within the European Universities Alliances. It also provided for insightful discussions and collaboration among representatives from various European universities, external stakeholders and EU Member States for pertaining to the future course and sustainable support for alliances in their R&I domains. The Forum brought together over 200 participants and held six plenary sessions, four workshops and three roundtables. The nine person strong EPICUR delegation presented the EPICommunity platform to which the audience expressed very positive comments, participated in the roundtable on "Taking care of the knowledge square: holistic support for a holistic handling of all four dimensions", took part in the poster session, and provided a workshop moderator and two rapporteurs.

Spreading the word about the EPICUR Inter-University Campus

The "EPICUR Inter-University Campus-EIUC" implemented by AUTh, is a working ecosystem that has attracted attention from other alliances. Several presentations were given in various meetings and events, such as on 18th June 2024, in the event "Greek HEI and European Universities Alliances: Opportunities and Challenges" co-organised by the National Technical University of Athens and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the 20th June "Overcoming Interoperability Challenges in European Higher Education" webinar. The presentation pointed out the challenges faced, the solutions provided and the support of the actions carried out by the European Digital Education Hub. Moreover, EPICUR was one of the selected alliances to participate in the ESC Technical Development Forum meetings.

FOR-EU - Forum of European Universities

Since 2020, the European Universities Alliances have developed together an informal cooperation network to share experiences, challenges and good practices both on a coordinator level and within specific topical subgroups to facilitate mutual learning and exchange in a non-competitive environment. As coordinator of the EPICUR alliance, Unistra has been fully involved in FOR-EU1, the group of first generation alliances, for the past three years, in particular as co-leader of the coordinators' group which meets monthly. Experts from AUTh, KIT, UFR, UvA and Unistra currently lead or participate in several FOR-EU subgroups such as multilingualism, research and innovation, European degrees, digitalisation, project management and communication. This has helped to raise EPICUR's profile, including with the Commission and key players in the European higher education sector.

Stronger together: evolution of the FOR-EU Network

For 4 years, the FOR-EU cooperation network grew in number of topics and participants, and EPICUR's involvement in these meetings deepend as well. Alliance's experts have been brought together across countries and institutions to form active communities on more than 20 strategic topics, such as education cooperation, governance, research and innovation dimension of alliances, or student engagement. Due to the increasingly large-scale nature and impact of the European Universities Initiative, it was time to merge all FOR-EU groups and dedicate resources to it.

to a Community of Practice

In February 2024, EPICUR alliance alongside 18 peer alliances submitted to the European Commission a proposal of the FOREU4ALL project. After selection in June 2024, the project which was awarded 1.8 million euros for 48 months, will begin in November 2024. Continuing its engagement within FOR-EU, Unistra will be co-leading one of the Work Packages of FOR-EU4ALL. FOR-EU4All will reflect the fruitful collaboration and related extensive expertise that exists in FOR-EU. It will merge, formalise, and scale up the informal processes and structures that naturally developed over the past four years, and focus on supporting efficient administration, coordination, communication and dissemination. Moreover, FOR-EU4All will strongly focus on linkages with the wider Higher Education sector, collaboration with existing networks and stakeholder representatives, as well as engagement with decision-makers on both achievements and challenges related to the EUI.

MAIN EVENTS

On 1-3 July 2024, Early Career Researchers from the EPICluster teams presented the results of their respective projects in Strasbourg during the EPICluster Open Science Days. Addressing scientific and societal challenges, the topic of their research were presented to the public in four open sessions, held in a hybrid format at the University of Strasbourg, followed by a presentation to the EPICUR Executive Board.
After the presentations, the EPICluster groups had the opportunity to experience an immersive show in the planetarium of the Jardin des Sciences.

On 11-12 June 2024, over 100 participants from the 9 EPICUR partner universities, as well as from other European alliances and Associated Partners, participated in the Annual EPICUR Forum. Panel debates, workshops and thematic discussions aimed at exploring and sharing perspectives on innovative pedagogy.
The first day of the Forum was held at *La Cité du Train*, a railway museum in Mulhouse and the largest railway museum in Europe!
During the forum, participants had the opportunity to discuss the pedagogical innovation in European alliances, and how European alliances can respond to the needs for skills in our society. Productive workshops were held on many important topics for instructors: how to create a European Alliance Course, how to address societal challenges through research and challenge-based learning, how to ensure the quality of a European Alliance educational offer.

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF EPICUR

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