

ACA Reflection Paper

Minding the gap –
Higher education, research and
innovation in international cooperation

July 2020

The European voice of national organisations
for internationalisation of higher education

ACA
ACADEMIC
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A. BACKGROUND

Further enhancing the synergies *within* and between higher education, research and innovation is of particular relevance for higher education institutions, which through their activities address all three dimensions of the knowledge triangle on a daily basis. Also at the European Union (EU) level, strengthening the functioning of the knowledge triangle has been on the policy agenda for at least two decades. It gained prominence through the Lisbon Strategy (2000 – 2010) and was subsequently supported via dedicated funding and related instruments: from the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), and specifically its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), the Erasmus+ Knowledge Alliances, and to the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMDs), to quote just several pertinent examples funded by different European programmes.

Presently, the topic of maximising synergies has gained new momentum in the EU policy framework through the preparation of the next generation of education, research and innovation programmes and related negotiations under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021 – 2027. Funding synergies has been one of three chapters whose negotiation under the Horizon Europe (FP9) programme lasted the longest. Synergies between the three areas are also highlighted as a cornerstone of the recently-launched European Universities Initiative (EUI) under Erasmus+, both in terms of complementarity of funding, as well as in terms of activities to be integrated and fostered by winning consortia. Selected European Universities are asked to develop “joint long-term strategies for top-quality education, research and innovation”. Synergies with other funding programmes, including the Horizon Europe programme, is also a key

feature of the proposal for the Erasmus+-programme starting in 2021.

The official appointment in November 2019 of a new EU Commissioner with a combined mandate for *Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth*, i.e. one that brings together research and education, is further regarded as a political step in the direction of securing stronger integration.

In this context, new food for thought is needed on how to jointly approach and integrate these dimensions in existing and forthcoming policies, funding programmes and activities fostering international higher education and research cooperation. And this is needed at EU, as well as national and institutional level.

As an association of organisations supporting the internationalisation of their higher education systems, ACA would like to feed into this evolving conversation by:

- Showcasing several successful examples of national policies and programmes run by ACA member organisations and related bodies, that have demonstrably contributed to further integrating higher education, research and innovation activities in an international set-up and in multiple ways (as presented in section B. and section D.). These examples are to serve as inspiration for policies and programmes currently designed at EU level.
- Further reflecting on implications for further action at European, national and institutional level (sections B. and C.), informed by other ACA policy work in the framework of the *2030 Vision of Universities in Europe*, which is to inform and shape policy developments in revitalising the European Research Area (ERA).¹

¹ ACA input paper: Towards a 2030 Vision on the Future of Universities in Europe, accessible at: http://www.aca-secretariat.be/fileadmin/aca_docs/event_presentations/Towards_a_2030_Vision_on_the_Future_of_Universities_in_Europe.pdf

B. SYNERGIES – MEANING AND FURTHER DIFFERENTIATION

Taking into account that synergy (/ˈsɪn.ə.dʒi/ noun) is defined as “*the combined power of a group of things when they are working together that is greater than the total power achieved by each working separately*” (Cambridge dictionary), it is important to underline that fostering synergies between higher education, research and innovation is not an objective *in and of itself*. Rather, better aligning policies and programmes in these areas is the **means to generate greater added value, to enhance quality of education and research, to boost innovation potential and to produce more lasting impact**. The quest for greater synergies should be thus driven by these overarching goals.

Further enhancing education, research and innovation and the synergies between them through the **internationalisation of higher education**, adds not only a “**fourth dimension**” to the knowledge triangle, but is an **essential ingredient** for maximising this potential. Factual and theoretical evidence show that international cooperation and exchange positively contribute to the quality of research, teaching and innovation, in a variety of ways. For example, by bringing different perspectives (in terms of experience, culture etc.) to the subject at hand, by bringing new knowledge unavailable in the local context, and by helping, at individual level, the development of new competences and skills that foster education, research and innovation.

A panoply of **actors and stakeholders work towards**, and often **work together** in guaranteeing that international cooperation contributes to the enhancement of synergies between education, research and innovation, the latter understood both as the creating new products and procedures outside academia, as well as new ground-breaking approaches in the practice of academic teaching, research, and international cooperation. **Internationalization and funding agencies**, for example, as are the **ACA members**, cross borders both figuratively and literally. In doing so, they create synergies both between sectors and activities in a given country, and between different countries. More specifically, as the examples of ACA members show (and as described in greater detail in section D), work is being done to ensure greater synergies across a larger number of dimensions:

- **Synergies in policy development**, as the example provided by the Finnish Agency for Education (EDUFI) shows, with Finland having prioritised linking education, research and innovation in its collaboration with the global south countries and higher education institutions, to respond to societal and community challenges, and to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and leading to multiple strategic partnerships.
- **Synergies between funding programmes at different levels**, as shown amongst others by DG EAC’s recently launched European Universities Initiative, where the funding provided by the Erasmus+ programme is being complemented in 12 member states (to date) by dedicated financial support, to better enable the participation of their higher education institutions in the European scheme. An upcoming earmarked call by DG RTD under the Horizon 2020 programme is expected to further fund the research ambitions of selected consortia.
- **Synergies within funding programmes**, as the RISE programme of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) shows, and which combines a national and an international component (RISE Germany and RISE Worldwide) to involve students into research at an early stage. The programmes have been sequentially developed, based on prior successful experiences of providing undergraduate students with advanced research experiences first in Germany and then abroad. The RISE Germany model is currently being expanded, within the Baltic Science Network through the BARI programme.
- **Synergies through joint management of programmes**, as the Norwegian example of the INTPART programme demonstrates, which is co-managed by an education and a research body, namely the Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education (Diku) and The Research Council of Norway respectively. The programme facilitates the implementation of different models supporting the knowledge triangle and the co-production of knowledge between researchers, students, industry and society.

- **Synergies through joint support structures and joint promotion**, as visible through the example of the Slovak Academic Information Agency (SAIA), which has developed joint support services for mobile students and mobile researchers, and which is jointly promoting higher education institutions and research organisations on the one hand, and student mobility scholarships and research fellowships on the other at dedicated fairs, through websites and targeted publications. The combination of these activities has enabled SAIA to improve the services it offers.
- **Synergies within projects and through specific activities**, such as research internships for Bachelor students (DAAD's RISE) or small research projects for students (as supported through Movetia's International Pilot Programme), or through the development of new knowledge and prototypes that are directly transferred to SMEs, non-profit organisations, as well back to the higher education institutions, in the revised curricula of study programmes (as can be seen in the Flemish Community of Belgium through VLAIO's TETRA programme).

C. REFLECTIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

A review of the case examples provided by ACA member organisations leads to a number of reflections and to possible implications for developments at EU level.

First, the pursuit of greater synergies should be carried with the **added value, quality and greater impact objectives in view**. This will prevent that processes become purely administrative, and that policies and programmes are changed only for the sake of change.

Second, it is clear that **cross-policy and cross-programme thinking and funding** is key for the development of greater synergies, and that this should become the **new modus operandi at European, as well as national and institutional level**. In the EU context, for synergies to materialise, it will be crucial that upcoming policies in the area of education and research substantively cross-reference and mutually support each other. For instance, in the upcoming Communication on the European Research Area (ERA) it will be essential that education and synergies with education are specifically addressed, as will be addressing in the future communication on the European Education Area (EEaA) the role of research. At the level of funding programmes, Erasmus 2021-2027 and Horizon Europe will need to further specify how deeper synergies are to be created *within* but also *beyond* the European Universities Initiative, through, for example, matching eligibility criteria, similar application procedures and coordinated project deadlines and timelines. Ultimately, DG EAC and DG RTD would need to find models to collaborate and co-manage respective actions aiming at greater synergies, in collaboration with national agencies and higher education institutions, as needed.

Furthermore, HEIs are working on solving global scientific challenges, and the UN Agenda 2030 with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a central guiding framework for countries and institutions. Consequently, cross-policy work could further be expanded beyond linking education, research and innovation at European level, to also involve DG RELEX and DEVCO and by looking at synergies with Official Development Assistance (ODA)-funded activities involving European HEIs on a global scale.

Third, the national examples also show the clear **added value of joint promotion of mobility schemes for students, staff and researchers**. At EU level, this could be emulated by joint promotion of Erasmus+ and MSCA mobility and research opportunities, for instance, particularly in non-EU partner countries. The involvement of students in research and innovation activities, like in the German, Flemish and Swiss cases, could also be encouraged and promoted in the two European programmes.

Fourth, **open and regular communication in the co-development process** by actors at different levels – European, national and institutional – is key, particularly as the expectation is for funding to be pulled from different sources to co-fund synergetic activities. A good example is the European Universities Initiative, where transparent communication between DG EAC, DG RTD and member states who design additional funding schemes to co-fund parts of the projects is of significant importance for the success of the action, and should be further safeguarded.

Fifth, as many higher education institutions in Europe are already well experienced in jointly addressing education and research in their international cooperation activities, having already tried different models, new funding lines (like the European Universities Initiative already does), should allow for **great flexibility in testing new models and concepts**, fostering the innovation potential. The Horizon Europe programme should encourage and reward the prior testing and implementation of their research at all levels of education through Erasmus+. Within the latter programme, research-based pedagogical approaches should be encouraged.²

Last but not least, working towards greater synergies between higher education, research and innovation should allow to **close the gap between different statuses assigned to education and research**, moving away from an excellence paradigm that is exclusively reliant on research performance and innovation. Through greater synergies, excellence in education would be equally acknowledged and promoted as essential for thriving higher education systems that are fully embedded in their local and global environment.

D. DETAILED CASE EXAMPLES OF NATIONAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES INVOLVING ACA MEMBERS

1. German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) – The RISE opportunities: Research Internships in Science and Engineering

SHORT INGRESS/INTRODUCTION

RISE Germany and Worldwide enable undergraduate students to complete research internships in Germany and abroad with scholarship funding by DAAD and support from doctoral students or experienced researchers who serve as their mentors. Students gain early insights into advanced research.

(POLICY) BACKGROUND

RISE Germany internships were first offered in 2005 to applicants from universities in the United States and Canada, with the program extended to the United Kingdom in 2009 and Ireland in 2018. The objective remains to promote student exchange to Germany in the fields of natural science, engineering and life sciences, and to motivate undergraduate students to learn more about Germany's research landscape and study opportunities. RISE Worldwide was launched in 2009 and allows German bachelor students to go abroad for an internship. The third program line, RISE Professional, matches graduate students from North America, UK and Ireland with research groups at German companies. Dur-

ing their internship, students join a research group for up to three months during the summer break. English as the working language eliminates the language barrier for students in the natural sciences. Interns receive a monthly scholarship, health insurance and a travel allowance to offset the international travel costs. The funding increases mobility for low-income and first generation students.

This program is attractive to international students, since they are often not eligible for scholarships and have limited access to internships due to their citizenship status. RISE is open to all full-time students from the relevant fields.

MAIN OBJECTIVE

Research has to be global: DAAD RISE supports promising young German and international academics individually and encourages them to gain valuable experience abroad. Participating in research work and being a member of an international research group allows the Bachelor students to determine at an early point in their studies whether a scientific career is right for them. The research experience elevates their profile by gaining practical knowledge in their fields, and the international component of the internship teaches students valuable soft skills. Their help on a single research project often leads to recognition in later publications. For many, the program is a catalyst for their master's or Doctorate.

² Synergies between the proposed Erasmus and Horizon Europe – Norwegian non-paper from October 2017, updated November 2018

MAIN RESULTS SO FAR

The RISE program has seen a steady rise in applications and alumni overwhelmingly recommend the international research experience to their peers.

The web-based selection process allows for internship providers to describe their profile and intended research in detail and interns can choose up to three projects that best matches their experience and interests. The final placement is done by DAAD based on a ranking by internship provider and prospective intern. This placement process results in an ideal researcher-intern match as both have selected each other. It is a win-win situation for both sides: Interns receive valuable hands-on practical research experience; supervisors receive practical help for their project and both improve their intercultural competences. Former RISE Germany interns return to Germany to pursue a Master's or doctorate program. Former RISE Worldwide interns continue doing research and offer projects themselves.

LINKS/REFERENCES

www.daad.de/rise

2. German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) – Baltic Science Network Mobility Programme for Research Internships (BARI)

SHORT INGRESS/INTRODUCTION

BARI is an initiative by the Baltic Science Network and funded by the EU funding line "Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020". BARI is designed to apply the RISE Germany concept to the Baltic Sea Region, thus extending it to a network of countries.

(POLICY) BACKGROUND

BARI provides a tool to foster mobility and brain circulation within the Baltic Sea Region (defined as members of the Council of the Baltic Sea States: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Russia and the observer member Belarus). The focus on young people favours an open-mindedness for new experi-

ences. It is hoped that in this group the incentive to explore new contacts and international connections is less driven by a career point of view than by curiosity and the spirit of adventure. This should make it easier to promote also non-conventional destinations. The target group should enjoy a great future, thus facilitating the sustainability of the international experiences and connections. The bottom-up process strengthens self-confidence of the future scientists, what is especially important in less-developed science systems. Within the Interreg project 11 partners from 8 countries cooperate, DAAD is responsible for setting up a platform to handle the internship proposals, the applications and the matchmaking process.

MAIN OBJECTIVE

1. To provide promising students (interns) with the opportunity to gain research experience in an exciting project of their choice.
2. To provide doctoral candidates (hosts) with additional skills (intercultural skills, language skills, personal management competencies) which are of prime importance in the global workplace.
3. To raise awareness of the next generation of researchers of the value of international cooperation within the Baltic Region.
4. To support high quality research projects.

MAIN RESULTS SO FAR

A pilot for the BARI concept is running right now. By the time of the meeting the submission of internship offers will be completed and the program will be open for applications by bachelor and master students. A preliminary report of the experiences and results should be possible.

SCALABILITY POTENTIAL

Yes, as this is the pilot for the upscaling of a successful concept in a European region.

LINKS/REFERENCES

www.baltic-science.org/bari

3. Diku (Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education) – International Partnerships for Excellent Education, Research and Innovation (INTPART)

SHORT INGRESS/INTRODUCTION

Different models of the knowledge triangle (multidisciplinary, cross sectorial, and agenda 2030 relevant), are explored and implemented through activities of student active learning and coproduction of knowledge between researchers, students, industry and society.

(POLICY) BACKGROUND

The policy priority of quality enhancement in Norwegian higher education through close links between research, higher education and innovation in content (research front), teaching methodology (research based) and “*academic communities*” (peer reviewed teaching), culminated in the White Paper on “Quality Culture in Higher Education” (2016) aiming to “close the gap” between the status of teaching and research alongside structures of merit for excellence in teaching. INTPART was commissioned by the government to underpin this policy. The programme is co-managed by Diku and its counterpart on research “The Research Council of Norway”. The programme is based on the Norwegian Government’s “Panorama Strategy for cooperation in higher education and research with Brazil, China, India, Japan, Russia and South Africa (2016–2020)” and other strategy documents promoting quality enhancement through international cooperation. Synergies between national and multilateral funding schemes (in particular with the EU framework programmes) is also a prominent policy priority and reflected in the architecture of INTPART.

MAIN OBJECTIVE

The programme encompasses several layers of objectives. At the societal level the programme aims to be a tool to tackle global challenges and create a sustainable future, strengthen industrial competitiveness, access to markets and strengthening the knowledge diplomacy. The strategic objective of the INTPART programme is to develop world-class research

and education in Norway through long-term institutional cooperation with the priority countries: Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Russia and South Africa and the USA in addition to France and Germany. Pending peer reviewed research funding is an eligibility criterion.

MAIN RESULTS SO FAR

The programme was established in 2015. The programme portfolio is now amounting to 90 projects and a total of NOK 365 million has been awarded through annual calls. The project period is three years not exceeding NOK 4,5 million. Strengthened network and knowledge base, improved access to data and cases, improved access to research infrastructure, enhanced quality of study programmes, and strengthened collaboration between institutions and academic groups in Norway are some of the key results of the programme per 2019. 52% of the projects involve cooperation with business and public enterprises. The majority of the projects are multilateral consortiums, composed of complementary expertise, and partly co-funded by the partner institutions. It is expected that rewarded projects have a lasting impact at the institutional level, including sustainable impact on study programmes and courses. While dissemination is also valued, it is not expected that each partnership has an impact at national level.

SCALABILITY POTENTIAL

Within the HEIs, teaching and research is organised in many ways across Europe and the world. In many cases education and research are located in different sections and locked in different system logics. Too often HEIs organise their support systems for Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 in different support offices for external funding. National funding programmes enhancing synergies in the knowledge triangle, and synergies with the EU framework programmes, might stimulate a modus operandi of cross-programme thinking.

LINKS/REFERENCES

INTPART call

Panorama Strategy

4. EDUFI Finnish National Agency for Education – Global partnerships for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals

SHORT INGRESS/INTRODUCTION

A notable aspect of the collaboration between Finnish HEIs and their partners in the global south is the link between research, innovation and education. Societal challenges are being solved through research, public-private partnerships, co-creation and problem-based learning. A driving force behind this holistic approach is the joint UN Agenda 2030 with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

(POLICY) BACKGROUND

In recent strategic policy work related to global responsibility and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) the links and synergies between research, education and innovation are clearly recognized. In addition to that, the capacity-building projects EDUFI has been supporting are often driven by mutual academic research interests and gaining access to field research when setting up partnerships with the global south. And very recently EDUFI has actually been witnessing an increasing number of strategic partnerships being created between Finnish universities and their long-term counterparts in sub-Saharan Africa.

To monitor and develop the implementation of the higher education policies, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture set up the Forum for International Policies in Higher Education and Research from 2018 to 2019. The Forum gave 17 recommendations to promote the internationalisation of higher education and research. The recommendations apply to country image communications, alumni activities, issues related to entry and stay in the country, stronger education and science diplomacy as well as global responsibility and sustainable development.

The recommendations related to global responsibility state the following:

- The HEIs and research institutes strengthen the education, research and societal dialogue enhancing the UN agenda of SDGs.
- An increasing amount of the Finnish ODA (Official Development Aid) is channelled to education, research, innovation and capacity building activities with developing countries.

Active global engagement encompasses the understanding of the rapidly changing operational environment, of the different world views and perspectives, as well as the competence of acting in collaboration with colleagues from diverse backgrounds. The actions also comprise the cross-cutting aspect of sustainable action and development.

The indicators for progress of the recommendations for global responsibility:

- University-specific institutional targets for the co-publications and research-based capacity building activity with ODA countries.
- University of Applied Science-specific targets for the innovation activity with ODA countries.
- Clear targets for global responsibility and sustainable development have been set within the HEI or research institute strategies, combined with an implementation plan.

MAIN OBJECTIVE

Creating solutions for solving global challenges of sustainable development in academic partnerships, based on community research, co-creation of education output, problem-based learning and innovation.

MAIN RESULTS SO FAR

The HEI ICI programme (Higher Education Institution Institutional Cooperation Instrument) funded by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs has seen many partnerships working around community research linked to education and innovation. Some of them have also managed to acquire funding from international donor agencies after the bilateral funding. In many of the collaborations, a public-private partnerships is combined with the third sector through NGO-involvement.

A HEI ICI partnership in Geoinformatics resulted in a World Bank-funded **Tanzanian Resilience Academy**, a new digital service model of delivering climate action for sustainable and inclusive urban development. Community mapping through Climate Risk Database, online courses, industry internships, research. Drone images, smart phones and open source software.

The leading Finnish Business, Engineering, Art& Design Aalto University is engaged in global partnerships by several funding organizations through their separate group called Aalto Impact.

One HEI ICI project PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING in East Africa brings together multidisciplinary student teams from four universities to develop **sustainable solutions to community challenges**. The project operates as a piloting platform for testing, sharing and refining the implementation of problem-based education, while building regional and global networks to share knowledge and deepen innovation capabilities in East Africa and beyond.

Finally, one partnership combined **nutrition-related community-based research** in Kenya with applied science and produced a local Food Atlas, the first of its kind. Later the Food Atlas was integrated in food science-related study programmes at University of Nairobi.

GraphoGame – Early Literacy game made by scientists. GraphoGame is an academically researched learning app, game and methodology for teaching kindergarten and primary school children early grade literacy. It combines Finnish educational and special needs expertise with neuroscience and local research done in Zambia CAPOLSA (Centre for promotion of literacy in sub-Saharan Africa).

LINKS/REFERENCES

Finnish International Strategy for Higher Education and Research 2017-2025 - <https://minedu.fi/en/international-strategy-for-higher-education-and-research>

HEI ICI programme (Higher Education Institution Institutional Cooperation Instrument) - <https://www.oph.fi/en/programmes/hei-ici-programme>

The Tanzanian Resilience Academy - <https://resilienceacademy.ac.tz/>

Aalto Global Impact, Problem-based learning East-Africa - <https://aaltoglobalimpact.org/pbl-east-africa/>

<https://www.graphogame.com/> (commercialization)

<https://info.grapholearn.com/news/> (research)

5. *Movetia – Swiss National Agency – International pilot programme*

SHORT INGRESS/INTRODUCTION

The new international pilot programme 2018-2020 aims to expand the existing framework for educational mobility

and cooperation geographically and to further develop well-known funding instruments and models. For concrete pilot projects this means that the focus is on innovative cooperation with partners outside of Europe.

(POLICY) BACKGROUND

The Swiss Federal Council laid the foundations for this three-year pilot phase at the beginning of the year 2018 with the amendment of the Ordinance on International Cooperation in the Field of Education, Vocational Training for Youth and the Promotion of Mobility (VIZBM). This legal revision made it possible to promote cooperation outside the European area. The Ordinance entered into force on 1 March 2018 and is based on the Swiss solution for the promotion of international mobility in education for the years 2018-2020.

MAIN OBJECTIVE

The programme is intended to expand the existing framework geographically (no limitation to certain world regions) and to further develop well-known funding instruments and models. For this reason the innovative character is in the spotlight. The innovative character may be understood as broadly as possible and may relate to all aspects of mobility and cooperation (from concept to implementation): How can mobility and cooperation be strategically developed? How can new approaches in the development of teaching and learning methods, training modules or curricula be tested? How can synergies between education and research be better supported? Etc. The programme is open to all educational sectors; trans-sectoral cooperation and national cooperation (in the same project) as well as synergies between education and research are explicitly encouraged.

MAIN RESULTS SO FAR

To date, 2 calls have taken place; the third one is in progress. So far 35 projects have been supported, 17 of them at higher education level. The interest, especially in higher education, has been enormous. The competition was very high and the funding rate correspondingly low. All types of higher education institutions, i.e. research universities, universities of applied sciences and arts, as well as universities of teacher education, have submitted applications. It was not possible to identify any prioritised world region, nor any of the disciplines. Among the project topics, it stands out that current

global challenges are omnipresent, such as the challenge of digitalisation or sustainability. With regard to the synergies between education and research, the following can be noted: numerous projects try to develop small research projects for students. For example, lecturers, researchers and students from several institutions and countries work together on a topic. Students then build their Bachelor's or Master's thesis on this topic.

SCALABILITY POTENTIAL

The aim of the pilot phase is to offer the service in a permanent national programme starting in 2021. The geographical focus can also be expanded (possibility to include Europe).

LINKS/REFERENCES

<https://www.movetia.ch/en/programmes/international-pilot-programme/>

6. SAIA, n. o. – International students and researchers – intra-institutional synergies in attracting, assisting, policy advancing

SHORT INGRESS/INTRODUCTION

SAIA has been dealing with international mobility of both students and researchers for already 30 years. At the same time, it plays a role of the national agency promoting higher education and research institutions from Slovakia abroad. By being also a national coordinator and a service centre of EURAXESS Slovakia, it is aiming at removing mobility obstacles and facilitating personal career development of researchers. SAIA's aim is to show how those programmes and activities influence each other and thus help improve the offers and services through synergies created under one roof.

(POLICY) BACKGROUND

Since SAIA joined the then newly established European network enhancing the mobility of researchers in 2004, it has more intensively worked on building up synergies with its major scholarship programmes. As a part of the contract for administration of the National Scholarship Programme of the Slovak Republic established in 2006, the "Study and research in Slovakia" has been promoted at 41 international fairs over the last 10 years.

Moreover, information materials have been created with the focus on various aspects that mobile students and researchers may face (e.g., SAIA produced several bi-annual editions of 3 major publications – "Study in Slovakia: Study Programmes Offered in Foreign Languages", "International Student's guide to Slovakia" and "International Researcher's guide to Slovakia"). On top of it, through its programmes, SAIA has developed expertise in several areas enabling the organisation to provide complex counselling services: starting from finding a scholarship opportunity or funding and accompanied by practical information about relocation issues especially those of immigration, e.g. visa conditions, working along studying, etc.

MAIN OBJECTIVE

SAIA's activities can be defined along 4 lines and are carried out with a view to maximising synergies within and between these areas:

- joint promotion of HEIs and research organisations at fairs, websites for international students and researchers,
- expertise and practical information about relocation issues for both students and researchers,
- following and influencing policies, and
- sensitising the academic environment about the internationals' needs.

MAIN RESULTS SO FAR

SAIA's long-established and synergetic activities have made it possible for the organisation to gain practical expertise on various issues connected with mobility, and to influence and initiate positive changes with much needed added value not only in own programmes, but also in a more general context, in the way the laws are being applied, but sometimes also in "changing the regulations".

How, more specifically? Here are some **examples**:

- Taking care of various scholarship holders and cooperating closely with higher education and research institutions, SAIA has experienced in the real life many obstacles foreign students and researchers are facing when it comes to visa and residence. By combining the expertise from all the sources (practical, theoretical) SAIA,

as a EURAXESS network member, established itself as a very active and valuable player in translating European legislation, esp. the so-called scientific directive 2005/71/EC and recently also the directive 2016/801 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing into practice.

Organising stakeholder panel discussions, seminars and trainings for the support staff of HEIs and research organisations, providing guidance and assistance to researchers and students and promoting the procedures arising from the legislation including the production of the specialised practical brochures and online tools provided us with thorough knowledge of the challenges occurring in practice.

This was crucial to become a reliable partner for state authorities when SAIA suggests law amendments ensuring smoother immigration procedures for students, researchers and their family members (e.g. no need for work permit for researchers, and their spouses, easier way of documenting no criminal record for researchers, special opening hours for clients from HEIs and research organisations at foreign police offices). Moreover, knowing the European context also gave SAIA the proper argumentation background. The law amendments subsequently required further cooperation with consulates and immigration officers who were often not familiar with the law novelties. Only the well-grounded legal arguments could convince the implementation authorities to apply the new procedures. Currently, within the EURAXESS programme SAIA promotes and monitors the application of the Directive 2016/801 and in cooperation with other national EURAXESS networks would like to prepare an overview of the state-of-the-art of intra-European student's and researcher's mobility framework, which could both be used at national and European level.

- With the detailed knowledge of immigration laws and procedures SAIA was able to propose changes in scholarship schemes to make scholarship holders more welcome – except for the usual detailed information on all obligation connected to their stay, and introduced specific allowance for covering extra costs connected

with the fulfilment of some residence permit requirement.

- The experience and expertise from the scholarship programmes and from EURAXESS Network is vivid and inevitable for one of the main SAIA activities – promoting mobility opportunities. The detailed knowledge of immigration rules makes the information portfolio for potential guests to Slovakia more complex and client oriented.
- In addition, SAIA believes that by combining the expertise from own programmes it is possible to positively influence and thus also promote the research career as the possible life trajectory.
- As an organisation with this unique combination of experience and expertise in Slovakia SAIA is often approached by universities and consulted on specific cases they deal with. In order to discuss achievements and the existing challenges in the field of internationalisation of education SAIA organises also regular annual meetings with vice-rectors in charge of international affairs. This makes the cog wheels fit well together.

SCALABILITY POTENTIAL

A first major advantage for the enhancement of synergies is the availability of scholarships or any other attractive opportunities for both students and researchers within one organisation, and their joint promotion, where appropriate. The second prerequisite is the ability to assist both target groups in practical matters related to their relocation and integration.

For example, SAIA, providing relocation information and assistance as a EURAXESS centre for researchers, has extended such counselling towards scholarship holders at the level of students, too. But it could work also the other way round.

At policy level, cooperation with authorities depends very much on the local/national setting and the institutional cooperation capacities. However, in many cases, liaising with national/local EURAXESS centres to create synergies could be very helpful. And, intra-institutional cooperation makes the efforts more visible and ensures higher impact.

LINKS/REFERENCES

<https://www.saia.sk/en/main/study-in-slovakia/>

<https://www.saia.sk/en/main/research-in-slovakia/>

<https://grants.saia.sk>

www.euraxess.sk

7. VLUHR – Flemish Higher Education Council – TETRA programme, funded by VLAIO, Flanders Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship

SHORT INGRESS/INTRODUCTION

The TETRA programme, funded by the Flemish Agency of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (VLAIO) has the objective to fund applied research projects at Flemish universities and universities of applied sciences. The goal is on the one hand to develop new knowledge and to translate this knowledge into useful concepts and prototypes for Flemish SME's. On the other hand there is also knowledge transfer to the study programmes at universities and universities of applied sciences.

(POLICY) BACKGROUND

Innovation is an important driver for the knowledge economy and for solutions of problems encountered in society. It is possible to speed up innovation and make it more effective, by enhancing the interaction between research groups in higher education on the one hand and SME's and social profit organisations on the other hand. The TETRA programme was created to stimulate and facilitate the knowledge transfer between the main stakeholders on both sides of the spectrum of innovation.

MAIN OBJECTIVE

The objective of TETRA projects is to translate recently available knowledge into directly useful concepts and prototypes, tackling societal needs or new market opportunities of a large group of Flemish companies (SME's) and/or non-profit organisations. All projects have to contribute to an economic objective such as competitiveness, employment, and invest-

ment in companies in Flanders. Beside this economic finality, a TETRA project can provide the opportunity to tackle a societal challenge. Last but not least, TETRA projects have to be aligned with the needs of research based higher education: they have to generate a traceable knowledge transfer to the higher education institutions involved and keep their curricula up to date, provide practice based research opportunities for their students, using innovative infrastructure in co-creation settings with companies and organisations.

MAIN RESULTS SO FAR

The TETRA program started back in 2017, and has known only minor adjustments. Each year a budget of 9,6 MEUR is available to fund around 25 projects. Most of the projects are successful and do reach after 2 years all of their goals. The Flemish companies, especially those without R&D facilities, are very satisfied with the knowledge transfer, which most of the time is immediately implemented. In some cases there are also proposals to fund a follow-up development project by companies, in cooperation with the research groups of a TETRA project.

SCALABILITY POTENTIAL

The TETRA programme already operates in the international context of the CORNET network. The funding for projects of international consortia, however, comes from national (regional) bodies. The TETRA specifics, combining research, innovation and higher education can certainly be an inspiration for stronger connections between research and education in the existing EU funding mechanisms. It can fulfil the specific need for knowledge and solutions for SME's who don't have the R&D capacities of bigger companies, as well as the training of the next generation of employees or founders of such companies.

LINKS/REFERENCES

<https://www.vlaio.be/tetra>

ABOUT ACA

Working under the motto “the European voice of national organisations for the internationalisation of higher education”, the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) is a leading European association supporting research, innovative practice-development and smart policy-making in international higher education (HE). Created in 1993, as a member-driven platform, ACA provides a shared voice to national agencies for the internationalisation of higher education in Brussels, and represents them in Europe, but also globally. Within ACA, the member organisations enhance their capacities and join forces in supporting and ‘doing’ future-oriented, top-quality internationalisation. ACA is also a brain-trust, with a long track record in conducting sound research and providing expert advice on key developments in international HE to universities, governments and supra-national organisations alike. ACA’s core membership and identity is distinctly European, ‘with an eye’ on global trends. The association is supported by a Brussels-based Secretariat that plays a coordinator and expert role for the membership.

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