"What does the European Degree bring?"
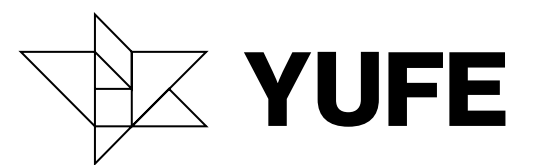## - 11th Knowledge Platform Consultation -

Snježana Prijić Samaržija
Rector of the University of Rijeka

Izola, November 12th, 2024

More ideas

More ideja

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EUROPEAN STRATEGY FOR UNIVERSITIES

SUPPORTING AND ENABLING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS ACROSS EUROPE

STRENGTHEN THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH:

Implement a set of flagship initiatives that will be for transnational cooperation what Erasmus+ has been for student mobility so far and Horizon Europe for excellent research: the visible expression of a distinctly European approach. With the growing responsibilities of universities for a resilient Europe, they need appropriate financial support.

SUPPORT UNIVERSITIES AS LIGHTHOUSES OF OUR EUROPEAN WAY OF LIFE:

Higher education and research in Europe support our European way of life through their trifold focus on 1) quality and relevance for future-proof skills, 2) diversity and inclusion 3) democratic practices, fundamental rights and academic values and freedom of scientific research. Flexible and attractive academic careers, valuing teaching, research, entrepreneurship, management and leadership activities need to be promoted.

EMPOWER UNIVERSITIES AS ACTORS OF CHANGE IN THE TWIN GREEN AND DIGITAL TRANSITIONS:

Support the full engagement of universities in unfolding green and digital transitions. The EU will only meet its ambitions on equipping more young people and lifelong learners with digital skills and skills for the green transition, or developing green solutions through technological and social innovation, if the higher education sector pulls its weight.

REINFORCE UNIVERSITIES AS DRIVERS OF THE EU'S GLOBAL ROLE AND LEADERSHIP:

Through deeper international cooperation within Europe and beyond, support universities in becoming more outward looking and competitive on the global scene, and in contributing to the strengthening of higher education systems in partner countries, in line with European values. This will help in turn boosting Europe's attractiveness not only as a study destination, but also as an attractive global partner for cooperation in education, research and innovation.

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The Erasmus+ **European Universities initiative**, in combination with Horizon Europe, Digital Europe and other EU and national instruments, will support ambitious transnational alliances of higher education institutions to develop and share a common long-term structural, sustainable and systemic cooperation on education, research and innovation, creating European inter-university campuses where students, staff and researchers from all parts of Europe can enjoy seamless mobility and create new knowledge together, across countries and disciplines.

A **joint European degree**, to be delivered at national level, would attest learning outcomes achieved as part of transnational cooperation among several institutions, offered for example within European Universities alliances, and based on a common set of criteria. A European degree should be easy to issue, store, share, verify and authenticate, and recognised across the EU. As a first step, the Commission will work towards developing European criteria for the award of a European Degree label. Such a label would be issued as a complementary certificate to the qualification of students graduating from joint programmes delivered in the context of transnational cooperation between several higher education institutions.

A **legal statute** for alliances of higher education institutions – for European Universities and other types of alliances - would allow them to mutualise their strengths together, make common strategic decisions, act together with a legal personality, and facilitate pooling together resources, activities and data. Such statute would facilitate deeper, long-term and flexible transnational cooperation, allowing the sharing of capacities, exchange of staff and the implementation of joint programmes, with the aim to award at the level of the alliance joint degrees, including a joint European degree.

The generalised use of the **European Student Card initiative** for all mobile students across universities in Europe will facilitate their access to transnational mobility at all levels. It will make the management of mobility easier, more efficient and greener. Ensuring that each European student can be uniquely identified across borders and across digital tools, will facilitate the roll out of European Student Cards across Europe and enable the complete digitalisation of the management of Erasmus+ student mobilities from application to issuing of study credentials[18].

BUILDING BRIDGES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION

FACILITATING TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

FIRST STEPS TOWARDS:
- LEGAL STATUTE FOR ALLIANCES OF HE INSTITUTIONS
- JOINT EUROPEAN DEGREE

SUSTAINABLE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCES

FULL DEPLOYMENT EUROPEAN STUDENT CARD INITIATIVE

European Commission

HOW TO GET THERE:
STEPS TOWARDS A EUROPEAN DEGREE

1
27 March 2024 The Commission proposes **European criteria** co-developed with the higher education sector **as a basis for the European degree, for adoption by the Council of the EU**

2
Development of **implementation guidelines** towards a European degree by a **European degree Policy Lab**

3
Member States to choose their entry level into the pathway towards a European degree and work towards integrating the European degree in their national or regional legislation as a new type of qualification

A preparatory European label certificate is given to students of joint degree programmes meeting the European criteria, together with their national or regional degree

The **European degree** is awarded to students as a qualification following a transnational education experience either jointly by a group of universities across Europe or by a possible European legal entity established by several universities from different countries

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European Commission: Political Guidelines 2024-2029

18 July 2024

" **Tackling the skills and labour gaps**

We need to make sure that we benefit from all high-quality skills irrespective of where and how they were acquired. This is why we will continue to work towards a **European Degree** and will put forward a Skills Portability Initiative to ensure a skill acquired in one country is recognised in another.

European Commission

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FOCI

**Future-proof Criteria
for Innovative European
Education**

The FOCI project – which brought together members of the YUFE, ECIU and EPICUR Alliances - was selected by the European Commission together with 5 other pilot projects under the Erasmus+ programme towards exploring and piloting the possible criteria that will be basis for the future European Degree (label).

Objective: Explore and test the deeper *transnational cooperation instruments* to further develop a genuinely *European dimension in higher education,* built on shared values**. European degree (label**) is a tool for recognising programmes which include European dimension.

The project run for one year (March 2023- March 2024). University of Rijeka was the consortium coordinator.

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Partner universities

KTU
Kaunas University of Technology

UvA
University of Amsterdam

TUL
Lodz University of Technology

UA
University of Antwerp
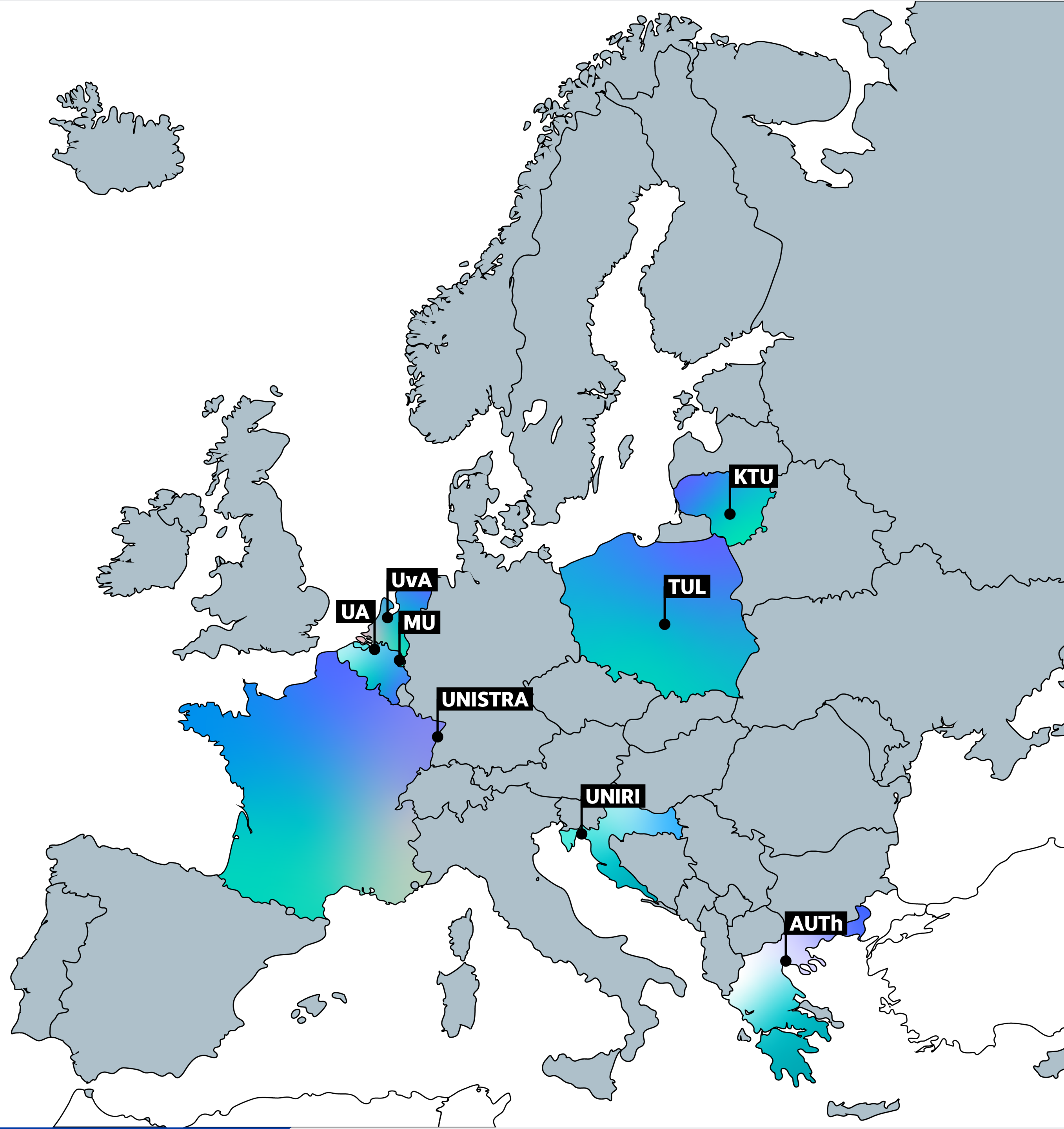
MU
Maastricht University

UNISTRA
University of Strasbourg
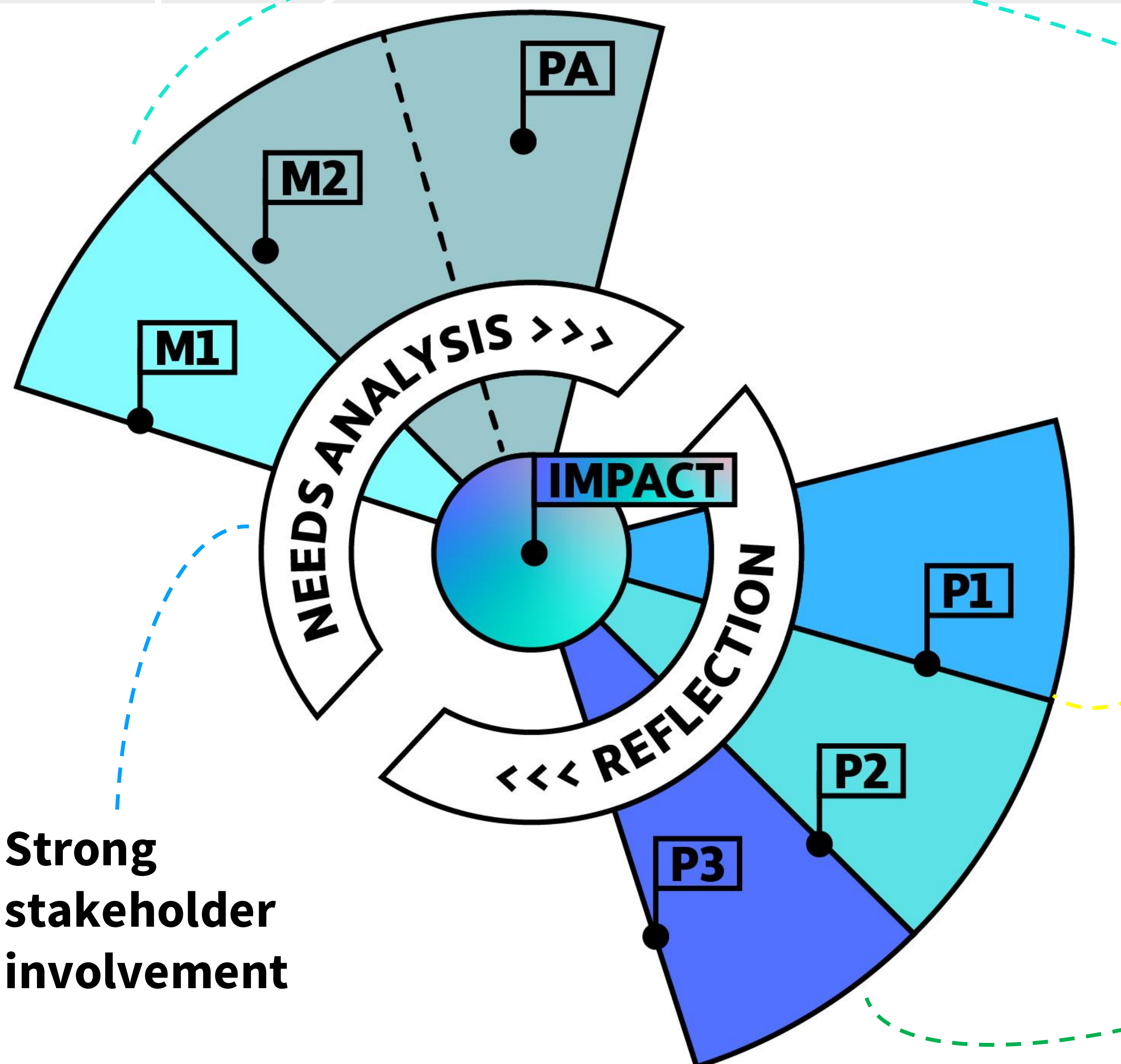
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University of Rijeka

AUTh
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

**Future-proof Criteria
for Innovative European
Education**

**Strong
stakeholder
involvement**

Focus on both **substantial** - *European degree (label)
criteria and its application*, and **formal** - *legal, procedural
and administrative* dimension.

Simultaneously exploring how to ensure that the
European degree (label) criteria is **fit for purpose**, but
also **how existing and future joint programmes can
adapt to these criteria.**

Additionally exploring how the criteria can be
applied to **other educational models besides full
joint study programmes** and what does it mean
for an educational offer to be truly „European"?

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Plan of work

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Perform needs analysis — Based on stakeholder consultations

Set up expert groups — Consisting of university experts and stakeholders

Develop pilot methodology — For awarding the European degree (label) and applying its criteria

Implement pilot — Simulation of the awarding process and application of the European degree (label) criteria to specific programmes

Produce policy recommendations — Based on the process simulation/analysis and programme reviews

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European degree criteria

Section 1: Transnational programme organisation and management

Category	Criterion	EQF levels
Higher education institutions involved	The joint programme is offered by at least 2 higher education institutions from at least 2 different EU Member States.	6, 7, 8
Transnational joint degree delivery	The joint programme is jointly designed and jointly delivered by all the higher education institutions involved.	6, 7, 8
	The joint programme leads to the award of a joint degree.	6, 7, 8
	A joint diploma supplement is issued to students, providing a comprehensive list of the outcomes that students attain throughout the programme.	6, 7
	The joint programme describes the learning outcomes and credits in line with the ECTS Users Guide.	6, 7
Joint arrangements for the joint programme	The joint programme has joint structures and/or mechanisms to establish and monitor joint policies and procedures describing the curriculum as well as organisational and administrative matters in accordance to national/regional legislation of all partners. Students' representatives are part of the decision-making process to define the joint policies and procedures.	6, 7, 8
Quality assurance arrangements	Internal and external Quality Assurance is conducted in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The institutions, the study field or the programme are evaluated by an EQAR registered agency.	6, 7, 8
	The joint programme is evaluated using the standards of European approach for quality assurance of joint programmes (EA).	6, 7, 8
Graduate tracking	The joint programme monitors graduates through a graduate tracking system.	6, 7, 8

European degree criteria

Section 2: Learning experience

Category	Criterion	EQF levels
Student-centred learning	The joint programme is delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in the learning process, and the assessment of students reflects this approach.	6, 7, 8
Flexibility of the programme	The joint programme offers the opportunity to receive and combine micro-credentials.	6,7
Interdisciplinarity	The joint programme includes embedded interdisciplinarity components.	6, 7, 8
Labour market relevance	The joint programme aligns with labour market requirements by incorporating intersectoral components or activities and the development of transversal skills.	6, 7, 8
Digital skills	The joint programme includes components and actions related to the development of advanced digital skills of students, all tailored to the capacities and circumstances of the joint programme, ensuring alignment with its scope and scholarly focus.	6, 7, 8
Transnational campus – access to services	The programme has joint policies for students and staff to have access to services in all participating HEIs in equivalent conditions as all enrolled students.	6, 7, 8

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Future-proof Criteria for Innovative European Education

European degree criteria

Section 2: Learning experience

Category	Criterion	EQF levels
Flexible and embedded student mobility	The joint programme offers deep intercultural experience, including a minimum of 1 period of student physical mobility (that can be split in several stays) at another or several partner institution(s) representing overall at least 60 ECTS at EQF 6 level and 30 ECTS at EQF 7 level. The joint programme has a policy offering alternatives for students who are unable to travel.	6, 7
	The joint programme offers deep intercultural experience, including a total of at least 6 months of physical mobility at another or several partner institution(s). The joint programme has a policy offering alternatives for students who are unable to travel.	8
Co-evaluation and co-supervision for dissertations	Dissertations are supervised by at least two supervisors and co-evaluated by co-supervisors or a committee with members from at least 2 different institutions located in 2 different countries.	8

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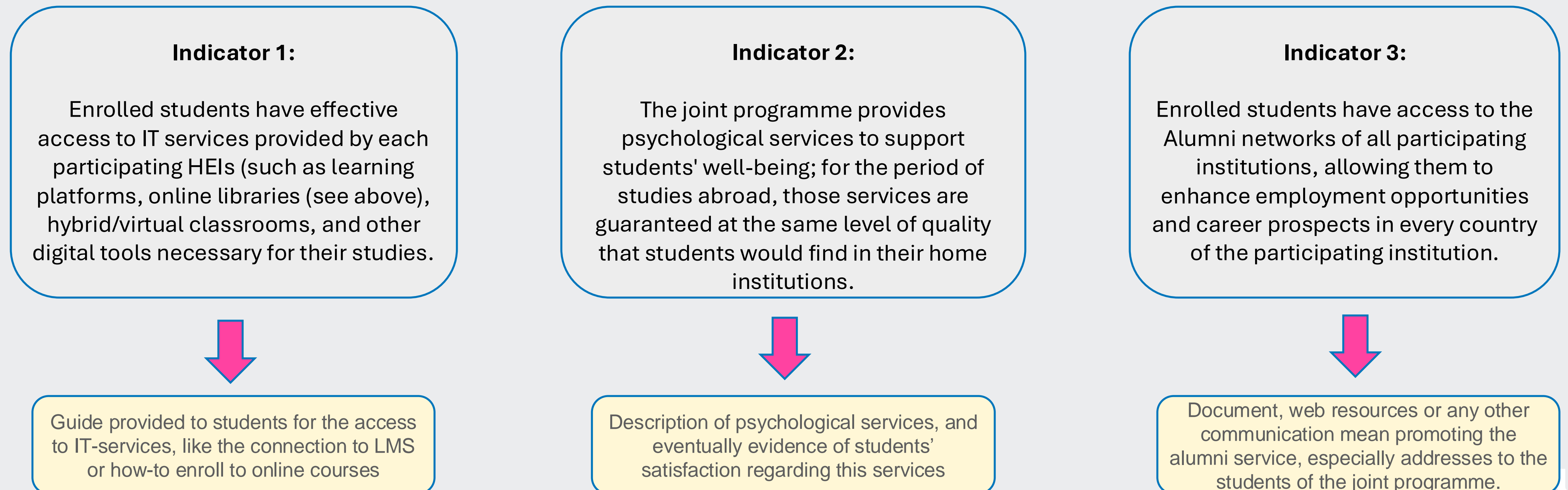## Section 3: European Values

Category	Criterion	EQF levels
Democratic values	The joint programme's joint policies promote and adhere to democratic values.	6, 7, 8
Multilingualism	During the joint programme, each student is exposed to at least 2 different EU official languages.	6, 7, 8
Inclusiveness	The joint programme commits to wide participation by fostering diversity, equity and inclusion by adopting tailored measures to support students and staff with less opportunities.	6, 7, 8
Green transition	The joint programme agrees on policies and actions related to environmental sustainability and implements measures to minimise the environmental footprint of its activities.	6,7
	The joint programme commits to the principles of the MSCA Green Charter	8

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Future-proof Criteria for Innovative European Education

Criterion 6:

Transnational campus – access to services

The programme has joint policies for students and staff to have access to services in all participating HEIs in equivalent conditions as all enrolled students.
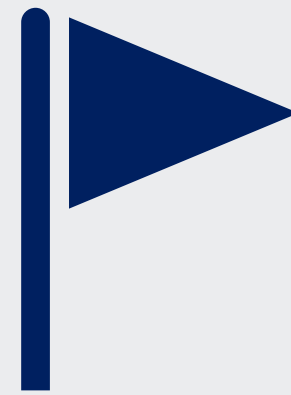
Indicator 1:	**Indicator 2:**	**Indicator 3:**
Enrolled students have effective access to IT services provided by each participating HEIs (such as learning platforms, online libraries (see above), hybrid/virtual classrooms, and other digital tools necessary for their studies.	The joint programme provides psychological services to support students' well-being; for the period of studies abroad, those services are guaranteed at the same level of quality that students would find in their home institutions.	Enrolled students have access to the Alumni networks of all participating institutions, allowing them to enhance employment opportunities and career prospects in every country of the participating institution.
Guide provided to students for the access to IT-services, like the connection to LMS or how-to enroll to online courses	Description of psychological services, and eventually evidence of students' satisfaction regarding this services	Document, web resources or any other communication mean promoting the alumni service, especially addresses to the students of the joint programme.

JFE

European degree model
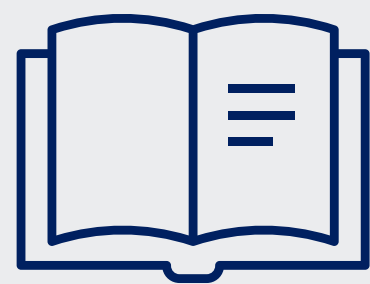
European degree (label) criteria

European degree (label)

complies with

awarded to

Programme

issues

European degree or a degree with the European label

received by

Graduate

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Policy recommendations

Five key policy areas:

1. **Purpose of the European degree (label)**

2. **Scope of the European Degree (label)**

3. **Fitness of the proposed European degree (label)**

4. **Legal frameworks and their impact on the European degree (label) concept**

5. **Policy framework for the European degree (label)**

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1. Purpose of the European Degree (label) and European Degree

Summary of recommendations:

- The European degree (label) should guarantee that the programme in question has **a strong European dimension and adherence to European values.**
- The European degree (label) **should not be a mark of excellence** (as typically understood) of the programme content in question.
- The imperative and expectation from the European degree (label) is that **it leads to some qualitative enhancement of European joint education.**

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2. Scope of the European Degree (Label)

Summary of recommendations:

- In the interest of future-proofing the European degree (label) initiative, **it is imperative to also apply these principles to smaller units of learning, such as micro-credentials**.
- This should **also include short programmes** (EQF level 5)
- The **recent focus on European degrees instead of the label should not come at the expense of this push for including units of learning that are smaller in volume** than a full programme.

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3. Fitness of the proposed European Degree (Label) criteria

Summary of recommendations:

- Structural elements of the criteria (number of HEI involved, use of ECTS, joint degree delivery, ESG-based quality assurance) are appropriate for the purpose of the European degree (label), though it should be noted that **these structural dimensions are already present in the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes and in the Bologna process tools**.

- European degree (label) criteria require significant investment of time and effort. Therefore, **it is essential that a clear and reliable evaluation methodology is developed,** together with a simple and lean evaluation process (potentially integrating this evaluation within other processes).

- FOCI delivered a detailed proposal of criteria revision to the European Commission, as a part of the **continuous consultation process**.

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4. Legal frameworks and their impact on the European degree (label) concept

Summary of recommendations:

- The European degree is recognised as the most desirable format for the future European degree (label). It is also recognised that **significant changes in the regulatory frameworks would be necessary for that format to be implemented,** which also leads back to question about clear added value.

- With the **European degree as a qualification recognised across EU** as the number one long-term option, **issuing the European degree (label) within the diploma supplement of joint degrees** is perceived as the best backup option.

- An accredited joint degree based on the European degree label criteria, i.e. **recognised quality label is also supported as an option.**

- Issuing separate certificates to students, next to diploma documents, is the least supported option.

- It would be useful to explore the link with **the outcomes of the Legal status pilot projects** and how they plan to tackle the legal barriers.

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5. Policy framework for the European Degree (Label)

Summary of recommendations:

- **Digitalisation of all stages** of the process is recognised as a key support factor. This also includes digitalising diplomas as documents.
- **Standardising the terminology** will likewise be important to ensure smooth implementation.
- **Alignment with currently existing national and international processes, structures and tools will be crucial** in ensuring that there is no undue burden resulting from this new initiative and that there are no overlaps, redundancies and duplication. Strong communication and interlinks with other relevant European-level bodies and the Bologna Process will be important.
- Until a legal framework for European Universities Alliances is developed (if so decided), **universities should be awarding bodies for the European degree (label).**

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5. Policy framework for the European Degree (Label) (2)

Summary of recommendations:

- One crucial point of alignment is that **no element is externally evaluated twice**.

- For this purpose, **cross-institutional external evaluation should be developed, ensuring that a group of universities can continuously award the European degree (label)** for all their educational offers.

- In order to receive the right to award the European degree (label), cooperation structures in charge of developing and delivering programmes leading to the European degree (label) **would need to undergo external quality evaluation.**
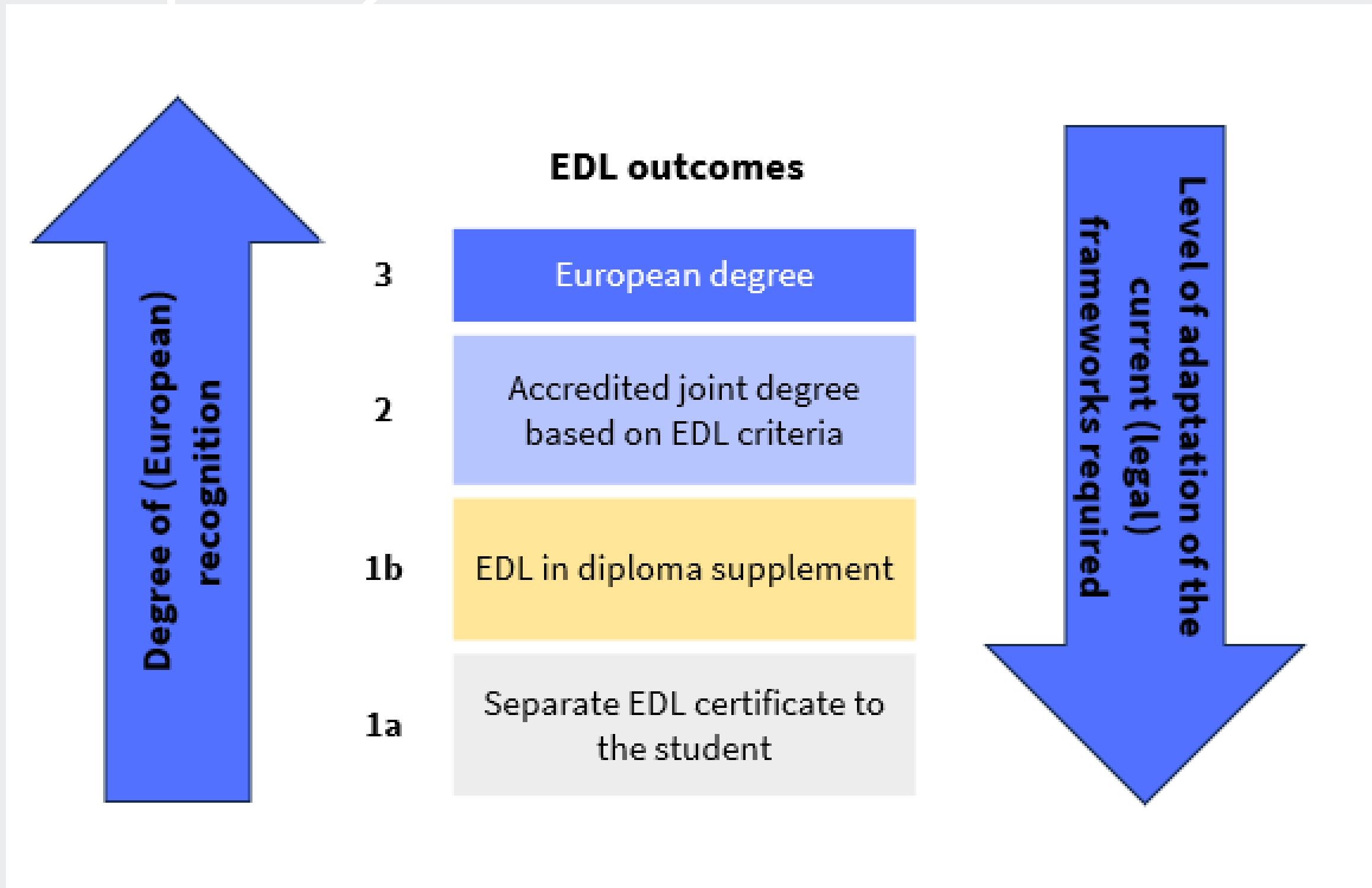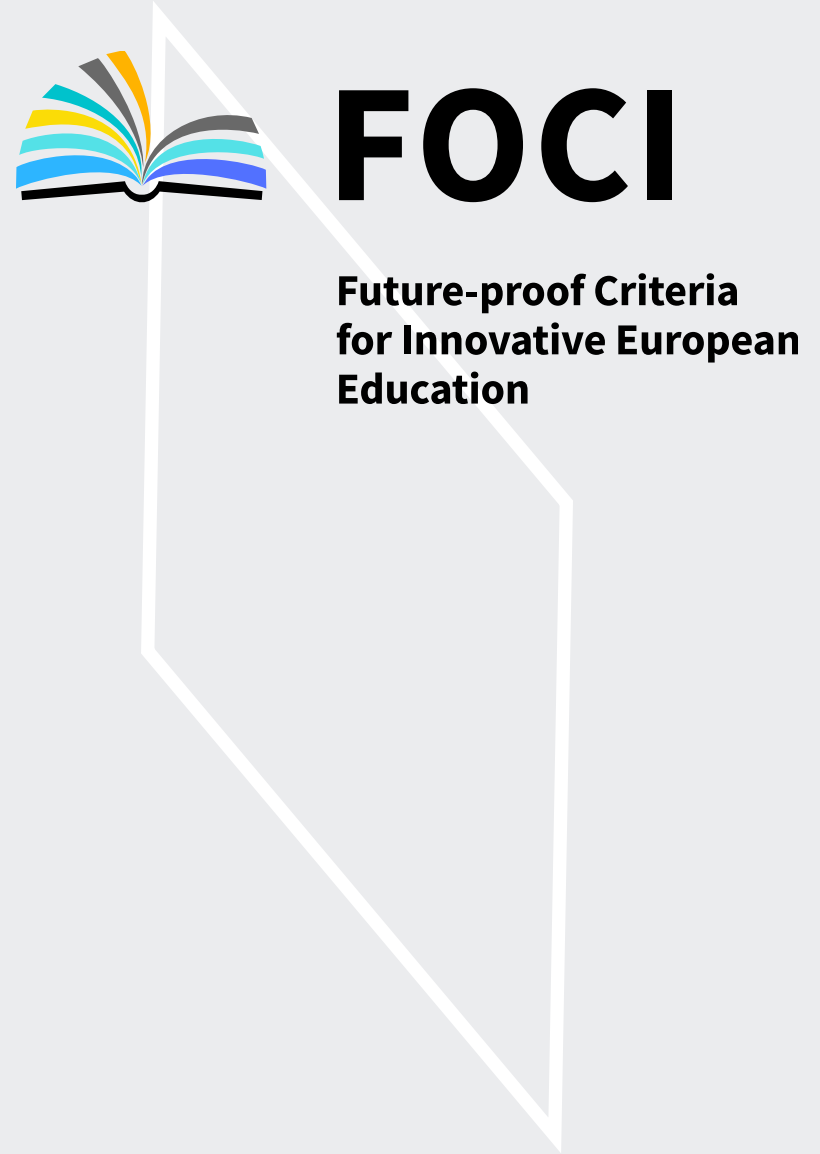
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Potential outcomes/format

EDL outcomes

Degree of (European) recognition ↑

3	European degree
2	Accredited joint degree based on EDL criteria
1b	EDL in diploma supplement
1a	Separate EDL certificate to the student

Level of adaptation of the current (legal) frameworks required ↓

Label

1. **Awarding a European degree label to joint programmes that meet the common criteria**
   1A. Separate certificate to student
   1B: Label in diploma supplement

Degree

2. **Accredited joint degree based on common criteria ('quality label')**

3. **European degree**

Roadmap towards a European degree

- Set up a **platform and communication channels for continuous discussions with stakeholders** about the implementation and added value of the ED(L)
- Integrate stakeholder feedback into the development process to refine and enhance the ED(L)'s framework
- Establish a clear understanding of the European dimension that the ED(L) represents

ADDED VALUE

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- **Develop an evaluation methodology and guideline**s for applying the European degree criteria
- **Set up a governance body** responsible for monitoring implementation and continuously updating the European degree criteria and the developed methodology
- **Continuously revise and update the criteria** and the evaluation methodology based on stakeholder feedback, including the broadened scope of the ED(L)

ED(L) EVALUATION

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LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- Perform a **comprehensive comparative legal analysis to identify potential conflicts** with national legislation and the Bologna Process
- Ensure that the ED(L) criteria and process are **compatible with existing national and international higher education frameworks**

- **Integrate the evaluation process with existing quality assurance mechanisms** to avoid duplication of efforts
- **Increase the number of programmes and/or alliances which undergo evaluation** against the ED(L) criteria and broaden the ED(L) scope
  - **Continuously collect feedb**ack and collaborate with involved programmes, institutions and alliances.

ROLLOUT & INTEGRATION

- Establish a mechanism for **ongoing monitoring and evaluation of implementation** of all ED(L) aspects
- **Cyclically adapt the criteria and process** based on evolving stakeholder needs and the educational landscape
- **Communicate the purpose, scope, and benefits** of the ED(L) effectively to all stakeholders

MONITOR, EVALUATE, ADAPT

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 (A) ADDED VALUE. It will be crucial to define and present to stakeholders the added value of the European Diploma: increased employability and skill relevance, increased adaptability and visibility of HE system, structural/legislative facilitations for joint studies (that guarantee a quality), increased potential for stratgeic coopration and global compettitiveness. We should not neglect the purely symbolic value if this certificate would indicate that the study was carried out in some form of European cooperation. The European degree should also indicate that the studies have a special European dimension, perhaps even more than "ordinary" joint studies.

B) SUPPORT OF NATIONAL/REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS. A fundamental condition for the success of the initiative is that national/regional governments support and integrate the European degree in their national/regional legislations as a new type of qualification. (the voluntary based approach).

C) EXTENSION FROM FULL STUDY PROGRAMS TO MICRO-CREDENTIALS. While the initiative only and exclusively applies to joint studies and the units smaller than full programs are outside the scope of the European degree model, the FOCI consortium recommended intensively to include smaller units of learning in the future *(minors, micro-credentials)*

D) BOOSTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU/BOLOGNA INSTRUMENTS such as European quality assurance standards and guidelines, European approach to quality assurance of joint programs, ECTS User Guide, Diploma Supplement. Also, in order to avoid additional burden, the evaluation of European diploma criteria should be carried out as part of (re)accreditation. It would be optimal that consortia (such as European alliances) can pass this evaluation once and then award European diplomas for all joint studies that they jointly perform.

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Thank you

Snježana Prijić Samaržija

Rector of the University of Rijeka