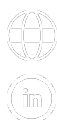


MS37- Joint Resources, Systems and Policy Plan – Public Version

*WP 7- Ensuring the Sustainability of our
ACE²-EU Inter-University Campus*



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Purpose and Scope (MS37)

The Joint Resources, Systems and Policies Plan (MS37) will guide the development and introduction of common policies and other joint resources and systems to enhance the operations and services of our core joint systems and units within the ACE²-EU Alliance. The elements of the plan are designed to facilitate the successful implementation of our ten-year evolutionary strategy and its associated phases, namely: establishment, operational delivery and development, sustainability, and legal recognition. This document provides a guide and roadmap for the development of common policies and potential joint resources and systems across the alliance.

1.1. Strategic Objectives

To achieve this, the plan pursues the following strategic objectives:

- **Alignment:** *Creating a unified framework for institutional infrastructures, and systems.*
- **Coherence:** *Ensuring technical and procedural synergy across all partner systems.*
- **Support:** *Enabling the seamless functionality of core units, specifically the e-Campus, APP Factory, ARIES Incubator, and SPACE Centre*

1.2. Strategic Evolution and Implementation

The roadmap follows the alliance's evolution towards a sustainable and integrated governance framework, operationalizing the core mission to collectively address future challenges through a unified strategic approach. Aligned with the evolutionary pathway defined in the strategy, implementation is centered on the following priorities:

- **Policy Development:** *Establishing common frameworks for joint educational programmes and quality assurance to support operational units.*
- **Structural Sustainability:** *Strengthening the legal and organizational consolidation to ensure the long-term management of shared resources and governance*
- **The e-Campus Ecosystem:** *Developing a federated digital environment that connects education, research, innovation, and service to society.*

1.3. Alignment with European Priorities

In full alignment with the Erasmus+ Programme and the objectives of the European Education Area, this Joint Resources, Systems and Policies Plan contributes to the long-term development of the ACE²-EU alliance by strengthening cooperation in education, research, innovation, governance and institutional capacity building. While a particular focus is placed on the development of shared digital resources and interoperable systems, the digital dimension represents one example within a broader institutional transformation. The alliance achieves this by streamlining digital mobility workflows and harmonizing credit recognition, effectively removing administrative hurdles to equip diverse learner groups with flexible learning formats. This approach also contributes to the objectives of the European Digital Education Action Plan by integrating education, research and innovation to address future societal challenges. Beyond digitalisation, the plan supports the gradual establishment of common policies, coordinated governance structures and shared operational practices, thereby contributing to the implementation of key European priorities and enhancing the long-term sustainability and impact of the alliance..

The implementation of this plan is supported by clear timelines for policy development. This ensures measurable progress, the mobilisation of collective strengths, and the continuous improvement of our joint governance and management structure.

1.4. Milestone Scope and Verification

The Joint Resources, Systems and Policies Plan defines a structured, strategic and operational framework for the development, alignment and implementation of common policies and systems within ACE²-EU. It covers key domains such as quality assurance, open science, data sharing, gender equality, inclusion and diversity, as well as joint educational policies and procedures, in full alignment with European priorities.

The plan supports the coordinated functioning of the alliance's core operational units (e-Campus, APP Factory, ARIES Incubator and SPACE Centre) through the promotion of interoperable systems, shared governance principles and harmonised policy instruments, ensuring coherence, efficiency, scalability and effective operational implementation at alliance level.

To ensure the formal validation and progress tracking of the Joint Resources, Systems and Policy Plan (MS37), it will particularly be disseminated through official channels (e.g., central website, social media, and institutional partner platforms) to reach external stakeholders and society.

2. Delivering our Mission through Joint Resources, Systems, and Policies

This section outlines the strategic framework and the operational entities that form the functional core of the ACE²-EU inter-university campus.

2.1. Introduction to the Alliance

The principal objective of our common vision, ambition, and associated long-term joint strategy in the context of the European Universities Initiative and the European Universities strategy is, to establish a European higher education inter-university campus which has the potential to transform the capacity and quality of institutional cooperation between ACE²-EU member institutions and bring it to the next level, fostering deeper integration, enhancing collaboration, and increasing our overall impact and influence within the European higher education landscape. Our inter-university campus (ACE²-EU) will mobilise our collective strengths and capacity across all four mission areas of higher education: including education, research, innovation, and service to society. The mission of ACE²-EU is to equip our students, staff, researchers, and external stakeholders with the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to collectively address future challenges, including the twin digital and green transitions and current socio-economic issues. We ultimately seek to create a legally recognised European University; with European and global reach, reputation, and impact; dedicated to "Addressing Future Challenges and Delivering Sustainable Societal Transformation Today", for the benefit of our stakeholders and society overall, within our regions and across the EU.

2.2. Mission, Vision and Approach

Mission

The mission of ACE²-EU is to equip our students, staff, researchers, and external stakeholders with the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to collectively address future challenges, including the twin digital and green transitions and current socio-economic issues.

Vision

Our vision is to establish a European higher education inter-university campus that transforms the capacity and quality of institutional cooperation, fostering deeper integration and increasing our overall impact within the European higher education landscape. We seek to create a legally recognised European University dedicated to "Addressing Future Challenges and Delivering Sustainable Societal Transformation Today."

Approach

ACE²-EU applies a challenge-based and work-based pedagogical approach. We mobilise our collective strengths across all four mission areas—education, research, innovation, and service to society—through multidisciplinary "Knowledge Creation Teams" in close partnership with regional and European stakeholders.

- **Applied:** We create joint education, research, innovation, and service to society learning opportunities and activities which have a practical, applied focus, deal with real-world issues, and utilise active challenge-based learning approaches.
- **Connected:** We connect the collective expertise and strengths of alliance members through our joint operational units and knowledge creation teams, thereby fostering a collaborative approach to the creation of joint learning opportunities and activities focused on finding solutions to future challenges.
- **Entrepreneurial:** We promote, use, and generate novel and innovative approaches in the development and implementation of our joint learning opportunities and activities to address and tackle future challenges thereby nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset, across our alliance and among our stakeholders and surrounding ecosystems.
- **Engaged:** We engage our external stakeholders and partners in industry, business, society, and government in the development and delivery of all our collaborative learning opportunities, activities and initiatives focussed on future challenges to ensure effective civic engagement and the promotion of knowledge transfer within our surrounding ecosystems.

Our Long-Term Strategy to Realise Our Mission and Vision

To realise our mission and vision ACE²-EU has developed a long-term strategy outlining the evolution of ACE²-EU over a ten-year period to achieve our ambition to establish a legally recognised inter university campus European University with European and global reach, reputation, and impact focussed on "Addressing Future Challenges and Delivering Sustainable Societal Transformation Today". Our 10-year evolutionary strategy describes how we propose to step-by-step transform and enhance our institutional cooperation and bring it to the next level, it has three key phases namely:

- **Phase 1:** The Establishment Phase which facilitates the establishment of the alliance, the development of our joint mission, vision and long-term strategy, the presentation of our first joint funding application, the initiation of our shared governance and management model and the establishment of our joint operational units. This phase will run from 2022-2026.
- **Phase 2:** The Operational Delivery and Development Phase which will see (i) the delivery as ACE²-EU of the first editions of our innovative, flexible, student-centred joint learning opportunities and activities in education, research, innovation, and service to society (ii) the development and initiation of the implementation of the ACE²-EU Sustainability Strategy and Associated Implementation Plan. This phase will run from 2025-2029
- **Phase 3:** The Sustainability and Legal Recognition Phase which will involve (i) The continued and complete implementation of the ACE²-EU Sustainability Strategy and

Associated Implementation Plan (ii) the development and initiation of a legal status plan for ACE²-EU to include a proposal for a pilot legal status initiative to be launched in 2027 and to run for two years (ii) the full implementation of a common legal status for the alliance, to facilitate pooling together of resources and activities to reach higher levels of excellence and act with a legal personality. This phase will run from 2027 to 2031. The evolutionary strategy phases are designed to have a level of overlap over the 10-year timeframe.

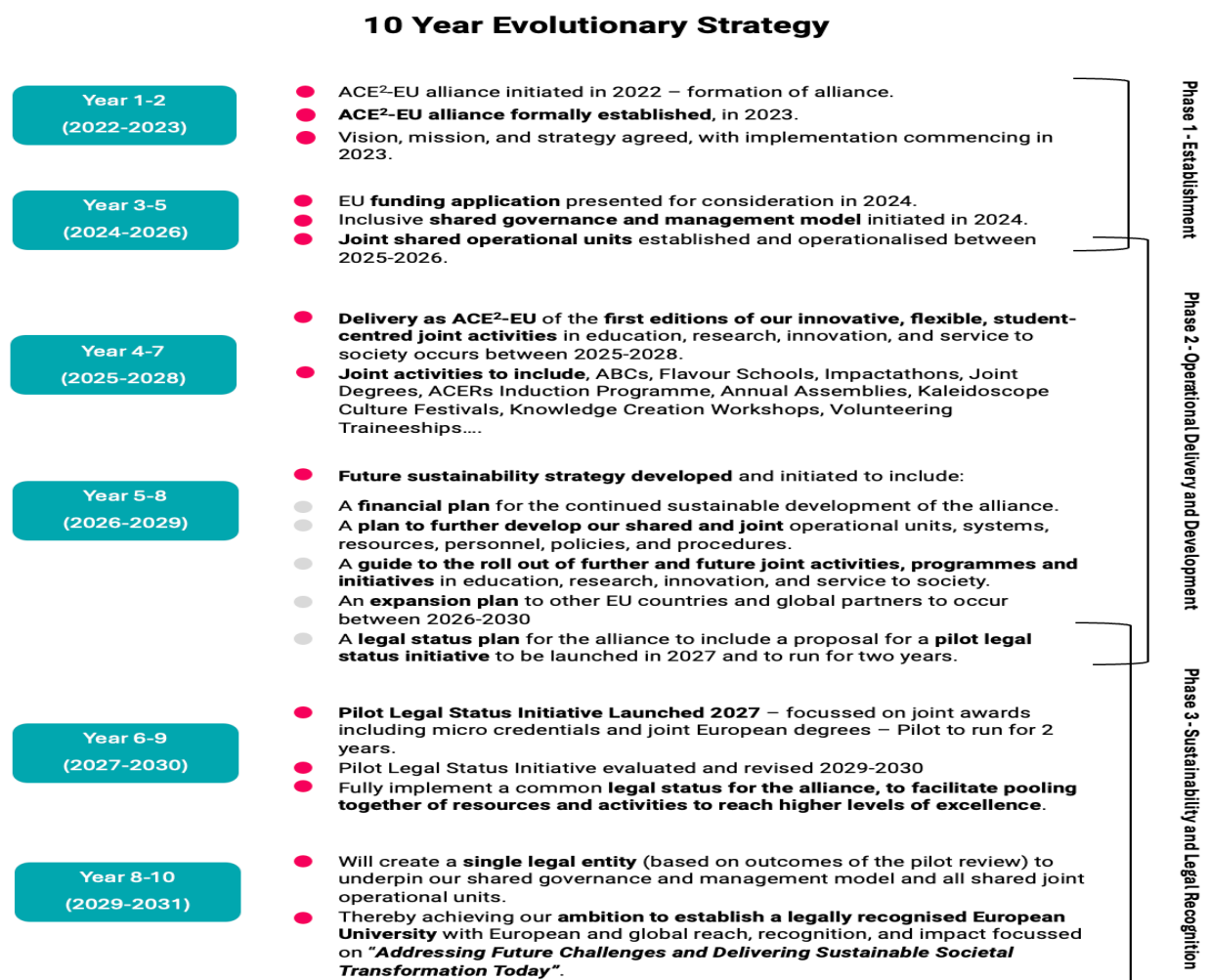


Figure 1: Timeline and Key Milestones of the 10-Year Evolutionary Strategy.

2.3. Shared Systems and Resources

To underpin the delivery of the ACE²-EU evolutionary strategy, the alliance leverages a suite of shared systems and resources designed to foster trans-alliance knowledge creation and seamless operational integration. These joint entities serve as the functional core for our inter-university campus:

- **APP Factory (Applied Programmes and Pedagogy Factory):** Responsible for the co-creation and delivery of joint educational programmes (e.g., Applied Blended Challenge Programmes, Impactathons, and Joint European Degrees). It operates through an Applied Programmes Unit for curriculum development and a Pedagogy Unit to support staff training and harmonise quality standards.
- **ARIES Incubator (Applied Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support):** Delivers joint research and entrepreneurship support. It hosts Applied Research, Development, and Innovation Centres (ARCs) in key areas (Sustainable Technologies, Digital Transformation, Health & Well-being), an Entrepreneurship Academy for students and SMEs, and a Central Support Office (CSO) managing the expert database.
- **SPACE Centre (Societal Partnerships And Cultural Engagement):** Drives joint service to society and cultural awareness. It features the Social Impactors group (focusing on inclusion and diversity through the Change Maker Ambassador Programme) and the Culture Hub (managing the annual Kaleidoscope Culture Festival and staff traineeships).
- **e-Campus (The Digital Inter-University Backbone):** The central digital gateway for all alliance activities. Built on a modular microservices architecture, it includes a Learners Portal, Operational Databases, and an External Engagement platform for societal partners. Its long-term operation will be managed by a dedicated legal entity (AISBL).

2.4. Need for Common Policies

To ensure the seamless integration and optimal functionality of our joint systems and resources, a robust framework of common policies is an essential requirement. These policies harmonize administrative, operational and academic processes across partner institutions, - while optimizing data management and cross-border collaboration. By standardizing these operational systems, the Alliance minimizes institutional barriers and ensures a consistent quality of service for all users across the inter-university campus. Specifically, this framework of common policies supports the establishment of flexible learning pathways and joint degrees, implementing open scholarship practices, (Open Science/Data) to ensure the democratisation of knowledge, and defining unified protocols for societal engagement.

3. Delivering Common Policies to Enhance Operation, Performance, and Impact

Building on a structured partner survey conducted in 2025, which confirmed the maturity of local institutional infrastructures, the alliance focuses on creating federated integration

and shared governance mechanisms. Local systems remain autonomous while enabling seamless alliance-level functionality.

The development of common alliance policies follows a participatory, bottom-up methodology. To ensure the seamless operation of our joint units, a structured framework has been established, distinguishing between overarching Strategic Framework Policies and functional Operational Policies:

Proposed Policy	Focus Domain	EU Policy Alignment
Joint Quality Assurance	Academic Standards & Excellence	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG)
Gender Equality	Diversity, Access & Inclusion	Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan Requirement
Identity & Data Security	Unified Access & Data Privacy	EU Data Strategy, GDPR & European Interoperability Framework (EIF)
ACE ² -EU Staff Development	Professional Growth & Capacity	European Charter for Researchers (2023) ResearchComp
Legal Entity Development	Institutional Autonomy & Governance	European Excellence Initiative
Unified Mobility Policy	Student & Staff Exchange Workflows	Erasmus+ Quality Charter
Joint Programme Policy	Curriculum Co-creation & Labels	European Degree Label
Open Science & Data	Shared Research & Knowledge Transfer	European Open Science Cloud (EOSC)
Intellectual Property (IP)	Industry Relations & Tech Transfer	EU IP Strategy

Table 1: Policies for Joint Service Delivery.

4. Additional Joint Systems to Enhance Operation, Performance, and Impact

The long-term success of the ACE²-EU Alliance depends on transitioning from project-based cooperation to a sustainable, integrated governance structure. The institutional consolidation of our joint systems—the e-Campus, APP Factory, ARIES Incubator, and SPACE Centre—will be significantly enhanced by the establishment of a dedicated legal entity.

Strategic Rationale for a Legal Entity (AISBL)

Following a strategic consensus reached by the Rectors and Presidents, a Belgian AISBL (Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif) was selected as the optimal legal form. This framework provides vital institutional autonomy and enhances operations through three core pillars:

- **Centralized e-Campus Management:** As the digital backbone, the e-Campus requires a single legal host to manage shared IT infrastructure, ensure unified GDPR compliance, and handle collective data ownership seamlessly.
- **Operational Capacity:** The AISBL acts as a single legal body for joint contracting and enables the direct employment of shared staff dedicated to the alliance's operational units.
- **Financial Sustainability:** The legal entity provides a permanent institutional home, facilitating joint follow-up funding and resource management beyond the initial EU funding cycle.

Implementation Roadmap

The transition to the formal legal entity is structured as a progressive trajectory to ensure legal compliance across all jurisdictions:

1. **Governance Drafting & Feedback (Completed):** Initial drafts of the Statutes and Bylaws were developed during joint working sessions (e.g., at the Medical University of Gdańsk) and reviewed to align with national legal frameworks.
2. **Internal Approval Window:** Member institutions utilize a structured window to secure necessary national or ministerial approvals, culminating in the formal endorsement of the AISBL documents.
3. **Formal Registration & Early Activation:** Following notary execution and formal registration in Belgium, the legal entity will be activated ahead of schedule. This establishes a robust two-tier governance structure—comprising a General Assembly and a Board of Directors—to operationalize resource management while keeping all activities strictly aligned with the Strategic Steering Group's mandate.

5. Conclusion

The Joint Resources, Systems, and Policy Plan (MS37) serves as the operational blueprint for the structural operational enhancement of the ACE²-EU Alliance. By defining the roadmap for common policies and the evolution of our shared units—the e-Campus, APP Factory, ARIES Incubator, and SPACE Centre—this plan ensures that the alliance can effectively mobilise its collective strengths across all mission areas to deliver sustainable societal transformation.

The transition to a legal entity (AISBL) is the final piece of this evolutionary strategy. It provides the "legal home" required to sustain these systems, manage shared resources, and maintain a unified digital presence via the e-Campus. Through the continuous alignment of our resources with European priorities, ACE²-EU is well-positioned to deliver a lasting impact on the European Higher Education Area, fostering a truly connected and entrepreneurial academic community.

6. Key European Policy References

- **Council of the European Union (2022):** Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability.
- **Council of the European Union (2022):** Council Recommendation on learning for the green transition and sustainable development.
- **Council of the European Union (2023):** Council Recommendation (EU) 2023/C 488/01 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talent in Europe (including the new European Charter for Researchers).
- **European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), European Students' Union (ESU), European University Association (EUA), EURASHE (2015):** Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).
- **European Citizen Science Association (ECSA) (2015):** 10 Principles of Citizen Science.
- **European Commission (2017):** European Interoperability Framework – Implementation Strategy.
- **European Commission (2019):** The European Green Deal.
- **European Commission (2020):** A new ERA for Research and Innovation.
- **European Commission (2021):** Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027.
- **European Commission (2021):** Horizon Europe Programme Guide – Gender Equality Plan (GEP) Eligibility Criterion.
- **European Commission (2022):** European Strategy for Universities.
- **European Commission (2022):** The European Student Card Initiative – Deployment Roadmap.
- **European Commission (2023):** ResearchComp – The European Competence Framework for Researchers.
- **European Commission (2024):** Competitiveness Compass.
- **European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) (2021):** Erasmus+ Charter for Higher Education (ECHE).
- **European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (2020):** Rome Ministerial Communiqué (Bologna Process).
- **European Union (2016):** General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- **European Union (2020):** European Strategy for Data.