ERA **POLICY**BRIEF

SCOPE OF THE POLICY BRIEF

In this policy brief, the European Universities pilot alliances report on the progress made through cooperation in selected R&I areas and provide a first set of recommendations to the European Commission for further policy development.

Policy background:

In order to strengthen strategic partnerships across the EU amongst higher education institutions, the European Commission targets the emergence of "European Universities" by 2024 by funding alliances from across Europe. The ambitious mandate aims to trigger systemic, structural and sustainable institutionalized cooperation between higher education institutions. As a complement to the Erasmus+ action geared towards supporting higher education cooperation models, Horizon 2020 support is dedicated to contributing to the research and innovation dimension of the alliances between European universities, in line with their shared, integrated, long-term joint strategy and in synergy with their education dimension.

This initiative is one of the flagships of the European strategy for universities that aims at supporting and enabling universities to adapt to changing conditions, to thrive and to take a leading role in the recovery of Europe, and in making our society greener, more inclusive and more digital. The adoption of this strategy was accompanied by a Commission proposal for a Council recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation.

In parallel, the European Research Area Policy Agenda sets out 20 voluntary actions for the period 2022-2024, including several of which are relevant for universities. The feedback from the alliances will help co-shape the design and implementation of the ERA Policy Agenda 2022 – 2024, such as ERA actions 1 (sharing of data), 3 (reform of research management), 4 (strengthening careers), 5 (gender equality), 7 (knowledge valorisation), 8 (research infrastructures), 13 (empowering universities), 14 (engaging citizens), 15 (role in R&I ecosystem), 17 (research management capacity).

FEEDBACK ON PROGRESS (MAX 1.5P)

1. **Please describe the challenges your Alliance encountered regarding cooperation between universities in the field of R&I in relation to the institutional change areas (transformation modules) foreseen.**

EU4ART locates a series of challenges regarding cooperation between universities in the field of R&I, which in certain cases impose fundamental difficulties. To describe this situation adequately, we allow ourselves to go into depth in this topic. We will therefore not be able to frame the discussion within 1.5 pages, but we are sure that an elaborate discussion is more fruitful than pressing the difficulties in a certain maximum of lines. The challenges in the field of cooperation include the following aspects. Artistic Research (AR) outputs are wide-ranging, however, when negotiating the goal-oriented nature of research processes—some of the terminologies, expectations, and focuses put forward by the EU do not necessarily reflect the needs of the AR field. Artistic practices are often process-based and, while highly impactful, they are not always necessarily output-driven. An example of this discrepancy of an external demand may be seen in the emphasis on the 'exploitability' of a specific output (to use official terminology), which focuses on an end-

product and not always on an understanding of the value of the process required to arrive to a finished state. A wider understanding, one which is not reductively instrumentalist, is required for Research and Innovation (which is also always-already process-based).

1. R&I and Epistemic equity. All four EU4ART institutions engage with the burgeoning field of Artistic Research (AR). As there are only two European University Alliances focusing on the arts, our positions stand for a much broader field of AR, covering all creative practices from fine arts to music, film, theatre, writing, etc. With this in mind, we are aware of the fact that different approaches to AR exist, as they relate to local needs, specifications, intellectual and research traditions, etc. (this is compounded by the changing political backgrounds in relation to the arts). A joint R&I approach that does not subsume or homogenise differences is a challenge that lies ahead. Given that it is a new field, AR institutions are not often considered as sharing the same status as larger universities, alliances, and 'stronger' disciplines—many of which have decades of institutionalised experience in R&I. Artistic Research produces new knowledge and breakthrough innovation, however, EU structures need to recognise this fact. Within this setting, EU4ART identifies the following challenges and urgencies:

   - The need for epistemic equity among disciplines, across the EU. In spite of the astounding advances of research in the arts, AR is poorly understood by inherited frameworks of evaluation and institutional levels across Member States. Epistemically, the arts are not often taken as equals in their capacity to produce knowledge (in relation to the 'hard' sciences, social sciences, etc.).
   - The directionality of R&I partnerships: institutionally, epistemic inequity negatively affects the field and R&I, broadly speaking. e.g. AR institutions are seen as add-ons to larger research projects, less often as potential drivers of research projects. A key issue is how Member States differentiate institutions of knowledge production—some States distinguish who is able to produce knowledge or not. Whenever this is the case, AR institutions are not able to award research or doctoral degrees unless they partner with 'real' universities.
   - Terminological expansion: Inherited terminologies from scientific disciplines are often used to describe processes that operate from different premises. Within AR, these need to be translated into the needs, requirements, and structures of the scientific field (again, in an uneven direction). Two polarities emerge: colleagues attending conferences do not seem to speak the same language or address the same topics, or; colleagues frame their research as science in order to comply with expectations (the latter is evidently not favourable to either scientific or artistic research). In many cases, research in AR is fully excluded from policy conversations. This problem is compounded by the imposition of external definitions of what AR/PR is or should be, which are often not based on discussions emerging from within the field.

2. Uncertain funding scenario. The main challenge for AR projects is how they are elaborated with limited funding (in spite of the enthusiasm that drives them). Lack of clarity in funding on a broader level has made it unclear if or how our activities can be further developed. This has compelled us to produce alternative plans that require longer timespans. This negatively affects both our ambitions for the new EU4ART proposal for ERASMUS+, and potential activities for tasks that would require further funding. An uncertain funding scenario on all levels – EU, national, regional, and local – immediately affects our mid-term plans and our ambitions for the coming years. However, this also applies for national and local funding, outside the scope of the EU, as the lack of acceptance of AR as a valid framework for knowledge production has impacts on research and innovation funding. We thus require of an approach that can think across all levels—Global, transnational, EU, national, local, regional, transregional, etc.

3. Pandemic. EU4ART aims to broaden its network and the visibility of AR across Europe and beyond. So far, we have easily achieved this because all EU4ART partners work with specialists in AR within their teams. Due to the importance of the initiative, local, national, European, and cross-sectoral collaborations have been easy to set up as there is high interest (see D3.2). Within the context of the pandemic, EU4ART partners have faced the following challenges: building up local AR hubs or extending existing groups; raising knowledge on, and the visibility and awareness of the field; and finding supporting partners and discussing shared terminologies. While intense discussions are thriving within the Alliance, they are only a shadow of what they could have been with more intensive in-person meetings. Exchange has largely taken place among key project staff to reduce risks and to plan straight forward.

4. Internal institutional changes. Two new rectors have been appointed within our first funding period, implying large institutional changes.

5. Improve communication and dissemination of the project are a crucial area to focus on in the upcoming stages.

2. **Please describe how you tackled or intend to tackle these challenges. Based on your project's experience so far (and if applicable), briefly outline case(s) that you consider as good practice and of interest to other universities or to policymakers.**

A key point of action for EU4ART is related to the EU's Third Mission, which focuses on societal challenges and cooperation with public entities and society, broadly speaking. More specifically, we want to make sure that artistic practices, which are by default deeply embedded within society, and are therefore highly impactful, are not downplayed in their unique capacities to engage with broader societal challenges. Artistic practice, which is fundamentally discourse-oriented by its nature, proves to create strong impact to discourses within society and related to its needs, and it does even more when an educational and research aspect connects to the creative process.

1. To tackle Point 1 (R&I and Epistemic equity), EU4ART strategically advances the following actions: (1) Defining and Locating Epistemic Inequity and (2) Advocating for Epistemic Equity. By introducing the structural disadvantages we are facing as a field of discourse, we advocate for epistemic equity for AR across broad international forums. e.g., the developing discussion on AR within the FOREU 1 and 2 working groups has led to first changes in the discourse within these groups, hopefully also productive for ERA's Research Assessment Reform, and for further exchange with other European Alliances. Across these settings, we advance AR as a valid and thriving field of knowledge production. We use all possible opportunities for visibility to raise the visibility of our alliance and future alliances in arts sector. We will continue with this strategy, advancing our agendas: the need for epistemic equity among disciplines; a more fluid directionality of R&I partnerships; a terminological expansion that enhances cross-disciplinarity.
2. In order to realize our long-term objectives, we require additional funding options. We are now engaged in extensive conversations regarding further finance. We plan to research all options, apply for separate tasks, and secure the continuation of our project. To address an uncertain funding scenario, EU4ART is co-signatory of a joint statement on sustainable and holistic support to all European University Alliances. For the second funding phase we are planning even more intense exchanges, personal (re-)encounters among members of the alliance, and pursuing new connections.
3. To tackle the pandemic, EU4ART has complied with the national regulations and biosafety rules. We have organised most of our meetings and conferences online. Whenever possible, we have met in person in order to get hold on key topics and stakeholders.
4. To tackle the institutional changes, EU4ART involved the new rectors in the project early on. New rectors have joined local teams, steering committees, and alliance meetings to catch up with challenges and opportunities of the project.

3. **Please describe the tangible progress that individual partners as well as the Alliance as a whole have made in terms of introducing changes in their entities as a result of this project. Please elaborate on whether the inclusive and integrated cooperation approach of your alliance helps accelerate institutional change of all partners (e.g. through sharing of practices from institutions with strong expertise or infrastructure in specific areas to institutions without).**

It is difficult to execute institutional reforms in art academies that have grown over the ages and therefore have developed very individual characteristics which they do not want to change, as these are their profiles. Reform only works through the employees, and we are now on the right track. The partners are enthusiastic in connecting with new professors, engaging networks and conferences, and providing chances for their students. Using the HfBK as an example, it may be stated that the professors' discussion at the European level is essential to re-evaluate the possibility of a third cycle at the HfBK in Dresden. Two alliance members already provide a postgraduate degree; in Dresden, discussions about third cycle structures beyond the only nationally relevant *Meisterschüler* title were not previously considered as key. It is increasingly apparent that students in the third cycle must be provided with the best opportunities possible. Then, if we wish to prepare them for the European and international academic landscape, we must ensure that they have the necessary skills. Consequently, a pilot phase for the third cycle is currently and successfully being initiated at those partner universities that previously lacked such a structure. Further transdisciplinary art-science cooperations were launched additionally.

The first year of the programme has provided ABARoma with a strong negotiating position with national authorities, allowing it to increase its efforts to establish a third cycle of study in the arts, which was still absent in Italy. In this phase, the transmission of expertise within the Alliance has been crucial, allowing ABARoma to design its "Courses for Artistic Research." Once approved by the Ministry of Education, this experimental third cycle might become a national model for the entire AFAM (Artistic and Musical HE) sector in Italy. Participating in the project has enabled ABARoma to explore new approaches to artistic research, including the creation of the position of Junior Scientist.

Thus, a number of post-MA students have been given the opportunity to conduct research projects in competition with their European colleagues.

In general, the alliance as a whole has brought considerable changes for all the partners, as the need for English teaching and didactics, the exchange of local perspectives to the common topic of AR and the participation in working groups on EU level have incited various internal discussions for the single academies and the alliance as a whole. Comparative approaches to central questions, like IPR or quality assessment, allow every partner to evaluate the own position in comparison to the approaches of the partners. This will hopefully lead to a move towards more flexible regulations and joint approaches toward future common tasks. International conferences allow the alliance to share their viewpoints with a broader public and therefore also to reframe more traditional approaches in the light of the alliance work.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS (MAX 3P)

In this section, the European Universities pilot Alliances make recommendations in relation to the policy topics identified below. Given the unique strengths and focus of each European University Alliances, please focus only on those aspects of most relevance to your case. Please feel free as well to expand to other policy topics you may wish to share your learnings and recommendations (other recommendations).

1. **Policy topic 1: facilitating transnational cooperation**

- Knowing that the Commission proposed a [Council recommendation to facilitate transnational collaboration between universities](#), which action should be prioritised to address the challenges you encountered as an Alliance in sharing capacities, infrastructures, resources or staff in R&I?

- As stated above, we recommend that the Commission recognises Artistic Research as a valid source of knowledge production across the board (focusing on fostering epistemic equity);
- We recommend that the Commission includes the Arts in a sustained manner, committing to long term structured funding for international cooperation, infrastructure, resources, and staff;
- The societal focus brought up with the SWafS project funding needs to be deepened in order to approach highly relevant and partly new academic targets: Citizen Science, lifelong learning or the support of societal development in remote regions can only be nourished through reliable and generous funding.
- We recommend the implementation of a generous system of scholarships for non-EU citizens that will increase Europe's international reach and mutually renovate discourses and approaches within a globalised Europe that cannot afford to isolate itself from partnerships in an increasingly multipolar world (see mobility point below). This point is key because it will allow academic institutions to work through and challenge the limitations of a strictly Western approach to AR.

All the recommendations and actions mentioned above will have an impact in Europe's relevance and competitiveness on a global scale. The Arts are undoubtedly one of the most globally recognised European assets—however, their corresponding funding and status in Knowledge Production is not yet where it should be.

2. **Policy topic 2: strengthening careers**

- Is there a need to develop a model tenure-track system at European level to contribute to solving precariousness of early career researchers? If you believe so, how do you think it should be structured?

We recommend a thorough reformulation of assessment frameworks, understanding that the arts need to play a role within them. Please find below a series of interlinked aspects that we consider to be critical:

- The issue of epistemic inequity mentioned above puts the arts in a strong disadvantage in relation to other disciplines. This means that our discipline is relegated to not having structures that could even ingrain a tenure-track system - compounding the already-extant inequalities in the traditional tenure-track system. Such bias blocks access and therefore relegates one of the most internationally visible areas of knowledge production in Europe (the Arts) to precarity.
- It is well known that artistic practices and work are highly precarious and depend on unpaid labour. The academic system requires a sociologically equipped understanding of this factor to improve careers within and outside the university, and this requires a rethinking of the academic curriculum.
- Following the point above, funding for research AR projects follows a similar path, where a naturalised and taken-for-granted precarity is prevalent. AR should be considered for generous sources of steady funding, recognising its enormous societal value.
- We highlight the need for a more cohesive understanding of the multiple career pathways in the arts that understands the complexities of the field, vs. the application template taken from other disciplines (as has been the case before). This would help us to better understand and bring together the different fields of excellence—academia, the art market, socially impactful practices, and other forms of artistic research practice.

Please see the next point below for an integrated assessment of our activities to tackle these issues.

- **In light of the [policy process on the reform of assessment](#) of research and institutions, what are your recommendations on how to address academic/researcher career assessment?**

To tackle the points above, we continuously and actively participate in the Stakeholder Assembly Meetings for an Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment, organised by Science Europe and the European University Association. As co-signatories, we will promote the reform and continue to advocate for a EU-wide Research Reform that considers the arts on an epistemic basis of equality.

However, we have encountered strong opposition to our presence in these fora, highlighting our initial point on epistemic inequity.

3. **Policy topic 3: digital transition**

- **What are the specific needs of the alliances to accelerate their digital transition in the R&I dimension, and how can this be addressed at the EU level?**

- **In particular, do you see a need for *additional* dedicated e-infrastructures for data storage and management that are distributed and interoperable? Please take into account progress regarding the development of the federated e-infrastructure for research outputs (EOSC, see [ERA Policy Agenda](#)), and the implementation of a digital platform for cooperation in higher education (see the [European strategy for universities](#)).**

Cutting edge digital platforms for publication that operate through OA and sustainable scholarship principles exist already (e.g., the Research Catalogue). The Arts have an inevitably public dimension. Given the public specifics of the field, we also require of infrastructural support to allow for in-person events and forms of engagement.

4. **Policy topic 4: access to excellence**

- **What is your advice on how to accelerate access to excellence in science and in value creation for all participants for higher education institutions across the entire ERA, through the European Universities Initiative?**

As stated above, EU4ART continues to advocate for defining Epistemic Inequity and highlighting it whenever it emerges. Instead, we promote Epistemic Equity, which allows all disciplines to recognise their

unique contributions to knowledge. True inter/trans/cross disciplinarity will only be achieved with equal recognition among forms of knowledge production, instead of boundary-policing. (For instance, the continuous framing of the arts as science promotes a specific articulation of knowledge that erases the specificity of the arts and applies a template that is not fit for its purposes).

The very question of 'access' is everywhere already biased against artistic production and artistic research. Paradoxically, the arts are among the most visible and globally recognised forms of excellence and value creation produced in Europe. Nevertheless, aspects of excellence cannot be mainstreamed in the context of AR where researchers work in a broad field with a large variety of methodologies and approaches. In order to be able to strengthen access to excellence in our field of AR, we need this complexity to be recognised and structurally matched with funding, visibility, and generosity.

Furthermore, the human hierarchies that emerge from coloniality, and continue to configure Europe, shape the current and radically uneven distribution of Global Majority individuals in academic positions. Ingrained disadvantage and homogeneity are antagonistic to excellence.

5. **Policy topic 5: increasing global competitiveness**

- **Europe's relative weight at a global level when it comes to research-intensive universities is shrinking. In light of this, a European Excellence Initiative will be established to improve global competitiveness of Europe's universities, in synergy with the European Universities Initiative of Erasmus+. In your view, what would be key elements of such an Initiative? Secondly, could you envisage that such an initiative specifically targets EU objectives such as the Green Deal or European Missions?**

- Research assessment: the neoliberal model of quantification is not suitable for the assessment of non-quantitative and rich variety of research outputs produced in the arts. Our research shows that Europe is lagging ≈16 years in relation to leading countries where the arts are assessed in more epistemically equitable terms (i.e., the United Kingdom's Research Assessment Framework).
- Mobility: freedom of movement within Europe is key for the cross-pollination of ideas and has been a powerful driver for our Alliance. Europe's cultural diversity and infrastructural integration is an asset to its global competitiveness. To further increase global competitiveness in a multipolar world, more mobility schemes – alongside corresponding funding – are required. Especially, schemes that allow for collaborations beyond the Global North and support initiatives outside of Europe's territorial boundaries. The arts thrive in cross-cultural settings; further integration of global mobilities will potentialise Europe's already dynamic networks of knowledge production.
- As stated above, epistemic inequity is an internal contradiction that unnecessarily thwarts the potentials of all knowledge fields.

6. **Other recommendations**

- Recognise AR as a valid source of knowledge production, understanding and quantifying Epistemic Inequity and unequal access to resources. Instead of requiring never ending modes of quantification for artistic outputs, put the onus of quantification on discerning inequity (which is actually a measurable item). i.e., how many AR projects are funded, rejected, discarded? What are the key arguments to do so? etc.
- Implement Epistemic Equity as a key premise across all actions, recognising how diverse disciplines produce diverse types of knowledge.
- Demasculinise discourses on knowledge production and the sciences i.e, 'hard sciences', 'solid research', etc.