



Strategic Paper 2009

1 Introduction

The European Consortium of Innovative Universities ECIU has in more than a decade developed into a mature, yet flexible and agile network. Small in number, the members have grown to become trusted partners in the strategic development of higher education. A portfolio of ongoing projects in different fields of activities fills the network with life. Looking back on the achievements of the last years, but also considering new challenges in the development of the European Higher Education Area, ECIU has set new, demanding goals for the future development of the consortium.

The rapid development of the European Higher Education Area calls for new strategic specifications, and offers new areas of activities. At the same time, basic assumptions on the consortium that account for the special characteristics of ECIU compared to other university networks, and that have contributed to the success of the last years are reaffirmed.

2 Characteristics of ECIU

The European Consortium of Innovative Universities is a network of universities who are united by a common profile, by shared beliefs and interests, and mutual trust. The ECIU universities see themselves essentially engaged in the Knowledge Triangle: promoting the interaction between research, education and innovation. They are innovative in that effect that they are not only open to new approaches in these three fields, but they also strive for the implementation of these new approaches. The ECIU member universities are strongly committed to the development of the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area. They support the goals of the Lisbon Agenda and wish to contribute to its success through their individual and joint activities.

ECIU maintains the profile of a network of universities that are relatively young, entrepreneurial, and progressive and have close ties with industry and the region where they are situated. The ECIU universities all have academic strengths in engineering and social sciences; also life science and humanities are strongly represented within ECIU. The partners are very committed to developing and implementing new forms of teaching, training and research, to assuring an innovative culture within their walls, to experimenting with new forms of management and administration, and to supporting and nurturing internationally-minded staff.

VISION

ECIU will be one of the global leaders in higher education through its collective expertise and commitment to innovation in teaching and learning and members' shared history of fostering economic and social development in regions in transition.

This vision will continue to serve as a guiding principle for all ECIU activities. How to put this vision onto action is rendered more precisely in the ECIU mission.

MISSION

The ECIU's mission is:

- *To contribute to the further development of a knowledge-based European economy, with due consideration to the increasingly global nature of the higher education market by inclusion of ECIU overseas members (Associate Partners).*
- *To build on existing innovation and enhance quality, in the member institutions, in the areas of: international collaboration; teaching and learning; regional development; technology transfer; and staff and student development.*
- *To develop high-quality collaborative educational programmes, by building on research and teaching strengths within individual ECIU member institutions.*
- *To act as an 'agent of change' by serving as an example of best practice and by influencing debate and policy on the future direction for European higher education within the context of the changing global realities.*
- *To take Europe to the World.*

ECIU will maintain this mission statement as a transparent description of the purpose of the consortium. All ECIU activities will continue to be conducted under this mission statement. At the same time, it is clear that every single mission statement has to be brought to life through activities of the member institutions. The ECIU members agree that a concentration on a few activities is appropriate for the consortium. Given the organisational structure and the available resources, priority is given to a handful of activities that can be handled without a large bureaucratic apparatus.

Core areas of enhanced commitment are:

- International education and student mobility (including joint educational programmes)
- Human resource development through mobility and the Leadership Development Programme
- The Knowledge Triangle (including technology transfer activities and the cooperation with the region)
- European policy

The spectrum of activities is amended by offering a platform for additional joint projects, e.g. in the area of international benchmarking, and for finding international partners and facilities for research.

ECIU will keep up the principle of restricted membership to only a relatively small number of universities to become trusted partners (12 – 15, with 10 to 12 full members from Europe and 3 to 4 associate partners from other continents). The Associate Partners from outside of Europe are of special significance for the consortium. They contribute additional opportunities and new perspectives to the activities of the consortium, and they provide supplementary intelligence. Their engagement creates an added value to the consortium by juxtaposing the European and the global perspective within the consortium, thus truly "taking Europe to the world".

3 ECIU activities

ECIU joint activities are carried out in fields where ECIU member institutions have special knowledge and expertise, and that are of great importance to them. They strive for outstanding performance in these activities, with the goal of achieving mutual benefits. The range of current activities includes the following:

3.1 Core Area 1: International student education / student mobility

Student Mobility is one of the core objectives of ECIU. ECIU members support the goal for student mobility set by the European Commission: In 2020, at least 20% of those graduating in the European Higher Education Area should have had a study or training period abroad¹.

The ECIU Graduate School offers a strong and supportive framework for the development of joint educational activities. To also raise the profile of ECIU as a resource for student exchanges apart from the Graduate School, future activities concentrate on structured forms of student mobility, and provide added value compared to Erasmus. The success of the Graduate School lays the basis for further activities in the field of student mobility and education. ECIU is aiming at offering a more diverse model for student mobility with regard to structure, educational level, and the involvement of member institutions.

ECIU Student mobility will consist of a four-level structure:

- Individual mobility between ECIU partners (both on the BA / MA level, arranged through bilateral agreements, with an ECIU “Quality label”)
- Twinning Programmes (both on the BA / MA level, with predefined modules for mobility and guaranteed recognition)
- Joint Master Programmes
- Joint Ph.D. Programmes

This structure also reflects the evolutionary process of the development of an educational programme: ECIU partners gain experiences through individual mobility. The feedback from students who have been on exchange is collected to contribute to the further development of exchange activities. This lays the base for the development of the more structured approach of a Twinning Programme, which again is the first step towards a joint master programme. As a consequence, individual student mobility between ECIU member institutions is embedded in the larger context of the development of an “ECIU educational area”, and helps building up the network closer, as well as improving its quality.

Cooperation with the ECIU Student Wing

The ECIU Student Wing is the representation of the students within the organisation. The main objective of the Student Wing is to incorporate the students’ perspective into the activities of the consortium. The Student Wing contributes to the development of activities to the benefit of ECIU students. It is heavily involved in student-related activities like the networking of ECIU exchange alumni and the Student Mobility Symposium. The Student Wing promotes ECIU among the students, and facilitates the flow of communication between

¹ The Bologna Process 2020 - The European Higher Education Area in the new decade, Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, 28-29 April 2009, page 4

students who have already been involved in ECIU activities and the ones who are interested in ECIU.

The Student Wing is governed by the Student Wing Charter. The president and the secretary of the Student Wing attend the meetings of the Executive Board to represent the students of the ECIU member institutions and to contribute to the policy of the Executive Board in cases where students are mainly affected.

3.2 Core Area 2: Human Resource Development

In the higher education sector, the importance of management skills has constantly grown and continues to grow, both among administrative and academic staff. Through the Leadership Development Programme and the Staff Mobility Programme, ECIU provides staff development activities in an international setting.

Leadership Development Programme

The Leadership Development Programme, unique in its characteristics, is one of the flagships of ECIU. The number of participants is ever increasing. The programme aims at academic staff with leadership and management responsibilities, senior professional staff in areas such as policy and planning, finance, human resources, etc., and high-potential staff likely to be in leadership positions within a few years. Participation remains exclusively for staff of ECIU universities. The LDP provides the opportunity to participate in a high-level human resource development programme to a price that lies well below comparable market prices.

Universities that engage actively in the Leadership Development Programme benefit not only through the personal development of their participating staff, but also through hosting the workshops. The working groups deal with strategic projects which are defined by the host institutions. Each hosting university tailors the project to its own particular interests, and in turn receives a thorough presentation and report on the results of the working group. The participation in the LDP is one of the instruments of ECIU to promote innovation within its member institutions on the organisational as well as on the strategic level.

Former participants of the LDP form a resource of young leaders with relevant capacities for higher education management. Through the LDP, ECIU has direct access to the knowledge and experience of these young leaders. ECIU aims at involving them in future ECIU activities, thus creating an added value both to the participants and the member institutions. Linking the former participants of the LDP establishes a network between ECIU member institutions on a different level and therefore strengthens the network as a whole. ECIU will develop an alumni network of former participants of the Leadership Development Programme, primarily through the use of virtual instruments like an internal website.

Staff Mobility Programme

The opportunity to do staff mobility offers an additional model for human resources development within ECIU. To further increase the value to participants, sending and receiving institutions, a more structured approach to staff mobility is aimed at, focusing on the mutual exchange of knowledge and experience. Different forms of staff mobility are possible within ECIU:

- Individual staff mobility: This form of staff mobility is negotiated and organised on the bilateral level between the sending and the receiving institution.
- Theme-related staff mobility: The consortium annually identifies a topic that is of interest to all members. Related to this topic, mutual staff mobility between the different member institutions takes place (or, visits from different members to one best-practice university). The experiences from these activities will be disseminated through reports.

- Further possibilities for staff mobility will be explored, like project driven mobility (funded through FP 7, ERASMUS MUNDUS), or inter-sectoral mobility (academia to industry).

To promote the opportunities ECIU offers with regard to human resource development and staff mobility, a network of HR department leaders will be initiated. This network will serve as a platform to get to know each other, to exchange experiences and to do benchmarks in areas that are of interest to them.

ECIU members incorporate the opportunities of the ECIU staff mobility in the local human resource development schemes of the member universities. Participation is incentive-driven. Local selection processes are subject to each member university.

3.3 Core area 3: Knowledge Triangle

The third mission of universities, their role to society and the issues of technology transfer and cooperation with industries and regional authorities are topics that characterize the founding principles of ECIU and shaped the consortium from its beginning on. Today, it is a standard for universities to engage in this kind of activities. All ECIU member institutions lay great importance to pursuing this field of activity. The broad range of experience at all ECIU member institutions offers the opportunity for benchmarking activities and mutual learning, as well as for joint projects on the European scale. ECIU offers a flexible network of relevant people in the tech-trans offices to disseminate and share best practice. In case specific fields for activities occur, the network can in an informal way be activated and will easily be able to respond. ECIU aims at organising a bi-annual conference / workshop for tech-trans office officials on a recent topic of interest to stimulate the group.

One additional focus will be to reinforce the involvement of regional authorities. In this context, the ECIU aims at developing a network of the local administrations of the regions where ECIU members are located in. All ECIU member institutions are strong in their relations to the regions and the local administration. Bringing together this experience and stimulating joint activities will not only strengthen the network internally, but will also increase the outreach it has.

Additional activities will be realised on a project base.

3.4 Core area 4: EU activities

A key objective of ECIU is to become a resource for the European Commission and to influence the policy agenda regarding the development of the European Higher Education Area. As a consortium, ECIU is in the position to draw from experiences not only of its individual members in different national contexts, but also from joint projects of members both within Europe and with partners from outside of Europe alike. ECIU is already making progress in raising its profile with different relevant organisations and individuals in Brussels, and experiences growing interest in having ECIU representatives join expert groups and discussion forums in Brussels.

ECIU has established a working structure for EU activities that involves the relevant personnel and contacts from the different ECIU member institutions. With the help of the Scotland Europa office, a strategy on EU activities is developed with priority topics of interest to ECIU. The overall aim is to become a resource for the European Commission and to influence the development of higher education policy on certain topics of importance to ECIU. The working structure consists of an EU working group (including the ECIU secretary), a representation in Brussels working for ECIU, a network of regional offices, and a network of senior contacts of the ECIU member institutions to the EC. While EU funding will continue to be a topic for singular ECIU projects and activities, the focus of our activities in Brussels will

be on influencing HE policy. The ECIU member institutions provide input on policy papers, and devote time for face-to-face interaction of board members with the relevant people in Brussels.

In order to raise the ECIU profile in Brussels and to actually contribute to the policy making process, ECIU concentrates its resources on those specific topics where we believe we as a consortium can offer special insight and knowledge.

3.5 Additional activities: Promoting joint research

Given the favourable combination of common profiles and objectives of member universities on the one hand and the huge variety of research projects going on, it is desirable for ECIU to better make use of these opportunities. While it is clear that research co-operations cannot be decided on in a top-down approach, ECIU aims at delivering added value to its members also in the field of research. The consortium puts efforts into disseminating information on opportunities for joint or complementary research activities. Gathering and publicizing information on the research foci of ECIU member universities, and especially on large research facilities, is one aspect of internal communication. It is therefore an inherent part of Board meetings. The dissemination of information on research foci benefits the Ph.D. students of ECIU member institutions: An inventory of research foci and research facilities is provided to facilitate the search for appropriate lab spaces and / or thesis advisors.

In addition to the core areas, ECIU offers a platform to organise networks and working groups for the exchange of experience in topics of interest to its member institutions. Each member institution is encouraged to use ECIU for initiating collaborations, either with the whole consortium, or with a number of partners. The ECIU secretary will help in establishing contacts, and will assist in the communication of these activities to the ECIU Executive Board.

ECIU engages in activities that are of importance to all ECIU members. Based on the shared profile of ECIU member institutions, and laid out in the vision and mission of the consortium, fields of activities are defined. However, not all ECIU member institutions are obliged to actively engage in every single activity. In certain cases, national regulations or individual institutional conditions might prevent a member institution from participating in an activity of the consortium. In this case, the member institution is asked to clearly state its perspective, and to clearly define from which activities it wishes to abstain. They will not be reproached with this decision, but it will also not prevent the consortium from proceeding with the activity in question. This "Pick & Mix"-Strategy ensures that the individual interests of the member institutions can be acknowledged without hurting the interest of the consortium.

4 Structure and organisation

4.1 Organisational structure of the ECIU

The over-all governing and decision-making body of ECIU is the Executive Board. It consists of one representative per member institution, with one voice each. The ECIU Speaker and the ECIU Secretary are part of the day-to-day management of ECIU. The rights and duties of the ECIU Executive Board are determined by the ECIU Statutes.

The Executive Board member is always either the president, rector or director of the member institution, or a vice-rector or vice-president. Every Executive Board member is supported through a Local Coordinator who acts as central contact partner for ECIU activities, both towards the other ECIU members and within the respective member institution. The Local Coordinators facilitate the ECIU activities within a member institution and coordinate the staff that is concerned with ECIU activities. The Local Coordinators usually participate in the Executive Board meetings.

The core areas of ECIU activities are dealt with in steering committees. Executive Board members and Local Coordinators are members of the steering committees. The steering committees bring forward the activities during the year, and deliver input to the reports for the Executive Board meetings. The steering committees meet the day before the Executive Board meeting. In this meeting, the steering committees prepare the strategic decisions of the Executive Board, and they give recommendations to the Board. ECIU has decided to establish four steering committees:

- Graduate School and student mobility
- Human resource development
- Knowledge Triangle
- EU policy

For each steering committee, a chair is appointed who chairs the meetings and takes the activities within the field of the respective steering committee further. The chairs are responsible for reporting to the Executive Board on the progress that has been made in their field of interest. In addition to that, a secretary for every steering committee is appointed that helps the chair with organisational issues, like keeping the minutes, disseminating information and following up on decisions made through the meetings. The steering committee secretaries work closely together with the ECIU secretary. To ensure a close and effective co-operation between the steering committee meetings, technical means like video conferences can be used.

In addition to the steering committees, ECIU activities are organised in thematic working groups. These working groups bring together representatives from ECIU member institutions that work on a common subject, e.g. communication officials in the ECIU PR Group, or representatives of international offices in the Student Mobility Group. The working groups on the one hand serve as a platform for the exchange of experiences and the development of joint projects. On the other hand, it is also their task to promote ECIU activities within the member institutions and to carry out tasks put forward by the ECIU Executive Board. The working groups therefore work closely with the ECIU secretary, and the respective steering committees.

4.2 Commitment

The range of activities of ECIU is confined by the resources available. This refers to financial resources, as well as to the time and commitment dedicated to ECIU activities by the staff of ECIU members. The funds collected through membership fees are currently only sufficient for covering the cost for coordinating the network and for supporting the existing activities. For additional activities, alternative ways of funding have to be found. ECIU has always lived

through and relied on the principle of nonpaid commitment, apart from the ECIU secretary and the ECIU GS coordinator. Member universities agree to commit resources and workload to the activities of ECIU. To support these activities, every ECIU member university is expected to have a certain budget assigned to ECIU activities, apart from the membership fee which is paid to ECIU. These funds should explicitly be used to facilitate ECIU activities, e.g. through the organisation of workshops or small conferences, or by meeting the travel costs that occur in the context of ECIU activities.

ECIU members are not only expected to engage through their Board members and their Local Coordinators in ECIU activities. Commitment towards ECIU explicitly includes additional staff, for example PR officials for the ECIU Marketing and Communications Group, study abroad advisors for the Student Mobility Group, and additional staff for the participation in other projects and activities. To bring these activities forward, it is essential that the appropriate people in the member universities are encouraged to participate in and to devote time and money (e.g. travel costs) to ECIU meetings and activities. The involvement in ECIU activities has to be institutionalised into positions, not individuals. That means that ECIU should be a clearly defined part of the job characteristics of appropriate staff. However, the individuals engaged have to be reaffirmed by their rectors / presidents of the value ECIU activities have to the member institutions.

4.3 Internal communication

Special attention has to be given to the question of internal communication. To tackle the problem of low awareness of ECIU activities beyond the senior level, the communication within ECIU and within ECIU member universities has to be improved.

Since internal communication has to be organised at the local level, ECIU members are encouraged to develop local models to improve the flow of information. Several elements seem to be essential to promote internal communication:

- Organisation of regular meetings at the member institutions, including the local coordinators, PR officials, International office staff, Student Wing representative, and other relevant people.
- On given occasions, disseminate basic information on ECIU within academic and admin staff of each university (e.g. the basic ECIU presentation)
- Send local PR officials to the meetings of the ECIU Marketing and Communication group.
- Include reports on ECIU activities in internal communication instrument like university newspapers or newsletters on a regular basis. This will make a close cooperation between local coordinator and local PR official necessary.
- Provide short reports on ECIU activities at the member institutions to the ECIU secretary to publish them on the ECIU website.

Conclusion

We believe that the European Consortium of Innovative Universities relies on a solid basis of achievements and established activities that have shaped the consortium's quality and value to its members. It is now time to make the opportunities of the consortium available to a broader group of people within the member universities to maximise the benefits of ECIU membership. But the objective of ECIU activities is not only to aim at results within the consortium. ECIU wishes to raise its profile externally and become visible on a European scale. The consortium has the potential to have an impact on the development of the European Higher Education Area, thus creating added value to its member universities. A clear definition of focus areas and preferred activities, together with a strong commitment by the member universities towards these common goals, will prompt ECIU to become a true resource on the European level.

Annex 1: Goals for 2009 / 2010

1. Student Mobility and the Graduate School

In the ECIU Executive Board meeting in June 2009, it has been decided to address the existing gaps in student mobility and exchange agreements among ECIU members through bilateral negotiations. The ECIU Executive Board has also decided to set goals for the improvement of student mobility. Every ECIU member will be asked to identify target numbers for their engagement in student exchange, twin programmes, dual and joint master programmes.

- **Increase the overall number of individual student exchanges among ECIU partners**
 - Address existing gaps in exchange activities between ECIU members in a bilateral way (by November 2009).
 - Have exchange agreements in place between all ECIU members. Provide at every ECIU member institution at least two places for every ECIU partner (by the end of 2009).
 - Increase student mobility among ECIU members by and by. Every ECIU member is required to set targets for raising the numbers of mobile students among ECIU. The aim is a balanced exchange level between each pair of ECIU members respectively.
- **Increase the number of structured student exchanges (Twinning programmes):**
 - All ECIU universities will be involved in at least two Twinning programmes by 2010.
- **Further develop the ECIU Graduate School**
 - ECIU aims at consolidating the existing Joint Master Programmes through continued support
 - ECIU will increase the number of actively running Joint Master Programmes to seven
 - ECIU will increase the number of institutions involved in JMP and eventually have every ECIU member involved in at least one JMP by the end of 2010.
- **Expand ECIU GS to Joint Ph.D. Programmes**
 - ECIU will continue the development of Joint Ph.D. Programmes, striving for funding through Erasmus Mundus. The Joint Ph.D. Programmes will reflect existing research networks and therefore are likely to include non-ECIU members as well.

2. Human Resource Development

- **Promote and further develop the Leadership Development Programme**
 - Get all ECIU member involved in the Leadership Development Programme, both as participants and as hosting institutions
 - Develop participants from LDP into a cadre of people that act as a resource for ECIU, create "alumni"-network
- **Expand activities in staff development**
 - Develop a network of HR officials as a platform for benchmarking and exchange of experiences
 - Develop a concept for structured forms of staff mobility

3. Knowledge Triangle

- **Build up a working structure for the Knowledge Triangle**
 - Establish a network of Tech-trans offices
 - Organise bi-annual conferences on topics related to the third mission of universities
- **Explore options to develop a network of regions**

4. EU Policy

- **Build up a working structure for EU policy**
 - Develop a network of regional offices in Brussels
- **Concentrate the activities on the following topics:**
 - Partnership with the industry
 - Modernisation of university management
 - Interdisciplinarity
 - FP 8
 - Role of universities in the regions
- **Become a resource for the European Commission and to influence the development of higher education policy**