

European University Initiative 2.0 in the “State of the Union 2026”

E³UDRES² European University Alliance Statement

23 September 2026

The European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen used her State of the Union address to set out the Commission’s key priorities and flagship initiatives for the period ahead¹, further detailed in the accompanying Letter of Intent.

The E³UDRES² European university alliance² welcomes the announcement of “European university alliances 2.0” as a clear signal of the growing importance the Commission attaches to this instrument. We consider it both as an encouraging strong sign for sustainable long-term funding paths as well as a demanding call for even deeper collaboration, strategic integration and advanced and accelerated transformation into “future universities”. The “2.0” label highlights the importance to deepen the visible, cross-European impact our alliances already deliver: a growing number of students benefiting from joint learning opportunities with a genuine European dimension, innovative opportunities for (life-long) learners bridging gaps between (higher) education and the world of work, urgent call for bringing relevant skills and innovative capacities into regional innovation ecosystems, research groups pooling expertise across borders, proactive exchange with the wider public, and a lived sense of European identity built through direct exchange with communities from across the continent. This growth in scale and ambition sits naturally within the Commission’s social and inclusion agenda, reflecting the alliances’ role in the quality and accessibility of higher education.

Yet the ambition of the university alliances still reaches further beyond. The European Universities Initiative has given real impetus to the transformation of higher education and to the many missions universities serve in society, with each alliance building on its own strengths, regional context and objectives.

E³UDRES²’s own mission is the social and economic development, innovation and quality of life of smart and sustainable, non-metropolitan regions supported by the capacity of member universities and their ecosystems. Through the E³UDRES² Talent Funnel³, more than 10 thousand of students have tackled 200 real-life challenges brought by companies, municipalities, cultural institutions and small businesses, building entrepreneurial and problem-solving skills alongside academic

¹ [State of the Union 2026](#)

² The E³UDRES² European University Alliance, founded in 2020, connects nine universities across Europe: St. Pölten UAS (Austria), UC Leuven-Limburg UAS (Belgium), Jyväskylä UAS (Finland), Fulda UAS (Germany), Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences (Hungary), Vidzeme UAS (Latvia), Saxion UAS (the Netherlands), the Polytechnic University of Setúbal (Portugal), Politehnica University Timișoara (Romania) and associate partners from among respective regions, as well higher education institutions from Albania, Kosovo and Ukraine, → www.eudres.eu

³ <https://eudres.eu/talent-funnel>

knowledge. More than 250 joint learning activities have engaged international body of students and staff. Joint innovation hubs and research groups across the alliance apply this same regional focus to health and wellbeing, social affairs, sustainable business, technology, digital services, artificial intelligence and creative industries. This is illustrated by 200 companies and NGOs from respective regions. Regions and municipalities in four EU countries have already invited alliance members to help design new, innovative European campuses⁴ – a concrete sign of the trust our approach has earned, and of the benefit our partners expect from it in the years ahead.

E³UDRES² also recognises its responsibility beyond its own membership. We have opened our events and activities to partners from Western Balkans, and have given particular attention to integrating associate partners from Ukraine – a direct extension, we believe, of the Union's enlargement and solidarity agenda.

Across competitiveness and economic development, technology and (cyber)security, digitalisation, health, and the cultural heritage and values Europe builds upon, E³UDRES² sees growing scope to contribute to the priorities set out in the President's report – strengthening active citizenship and democratic engagement among students and within the communities we serve. Together with the other European university alliances, each bringing its own distinct strengths, this network adds real capacity to Europe's competitiveness, its attractiveness, and its research and innovation potential.

E³UDRES² therefore welcomes the prominence given to the university alliances in the Commission's plans and confirms its readiness and ambition to put its members' capacities to work on this wider agenda, in close collaboration with its regional partners. We count on the Commission's continued support for this transformation – in financial terms, and, just as importantly, in political terms.

E³UDRES² European university alliance

<https://eudres.eu>

St. Pölten, 23 September 2026

⁴ E.g. Europacampus Hainburg in Austria, <https://www.ech.eu/en/> initiated by the Lower Austrian government