

E³UDRES²

Engaged and Entrepreneurial European University as
Driver for European Smart and Sustainable Regions

D8.2 E³UDRES² Regional Engagement Assessment Report on Approach and Key Conclusions

WP8 Quality and Evaluation
September 2026

Authors: Politehnica University Timisoara, Polytechnic University of Setubal, USTP -

University of Applied Sciences St. Pölten¹, Jamk University of Applied Sciences, Fulda University
of Applied Sciences, Saxion University of Applied Sciences, UCLL University of Applied Sciences,
Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences
MATE²

¹Former STPUAS – St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences

² MATE did not received any European funding from E³UDRES² 2.0 for the contribution to this deliverable



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Deliverable nr.	Deliverable name	Corresponding HEI
D 8.2	E ³ UDRES ² Regional Engagement Assessment Report on Approach and Key Conclusions (PU)	Jamk

Table of contents

Executive summary / abstract	4
1 Introduction	5
2 Methodological Approach	5
2.1. Regional Engagement Assessment Pilot Process	6
2.2. UASiMap Framework	7
2.3. Indicators	9
3 Mapping Regional Engagement: Self-assessment of 4 pilots	9
3.1. University of Applied Sciences St. Pölten (USTP)	10
3.1.1. About USTP and its specifics	10
3.1.2. Defined region of USTP	10
3.1.3. Conclusions of USTP self-assessment	11
3.2. Polytechnic University of Setúbal (UNIPS)	13
3.2.1. About UNIPS and its specifics	13
3.2.2. Defined region of UNIPS	14
3.2.3. Conclusions of UNIPS self-assessment	15
3.3. Jamk University of Applied Sciences (Jamk)	17
3.3.1. About Jamk and its specifics	17
3.3.2. Defined region of Jamk	18
3.3.3. Conclusions of Jamk self-assessment	19
3.4. Saxion University of Applied Sciences (Saxion)	20
3.4.1. About Saxion and its specifics	20
3.4.2. Defined region of Saxion	21
3.4.3. Conclusions of Saxion self-assessment	22
4 Critical Friend Reviews	23
4.1. Critical Friend panel composition	23
4.2. Critical Friend visit Arrangements	24
4.3. Overview of Critical Friend conclusions	26
5 Evaluation and analyses of Regional engagement assessment of E ³ UDRES ²	27
5.1. Overall Assessment of the Process	27
5.2. Data collection process	28
5.3. Reflection on indicators	28
5.4. Learning Effects and Added value	29
5.5. Challenges identified	30
6 Recommendations for Future Development	30
7 Transferability and Opportunities for Wider Use	30
7.1. Added value of applying REA in a European University Alliance Context	32

8	Conclusions	33
	Appendix 1: Comparison of Indicator Availability and Feasibility	35
	Appendix 2: List of Questions for the REA based on the UASiMAP	36
	Appendix 3: REA Blueprint.....	0

Executive summary / abstract

Regional engagement is a defining characteristic of the E³UDRES² Alliance, with each member institution deeply embedded in its regional ecosystem. To better understand and strengthen this role, the alliance piloted a Regional Engagement Assessment (REA). Rather than focusing on complex impact measurements, the pilot adopted a developmental and learning-oriented approach based on the UASiMAP framework. Four dimensions were assessed: regional strategies, education and lifelong learning, applied research and innovation, and civic and community engagement.¹

Four institutions, Jamk University of Applied Sciences (Finland), University of Applied Sciences St. Pölten (Austria), Polytechnic University of Setúbal (Portugal), and Saxion University of Applied Sciences (the Netherlands), completed a comprehensive assessment process combining institutional self-reflection, stakeholder engagement, Critical Friends Reviews, and peer-learning workshops. The results confirmed that all pilot institutions are strongly regionally engaged and make significant contributions to regional innovation, talent development, lifelong learning, and societal wellbeing.

The pilot demonstrated that the REA methodology is an effective tool for institutional learning, strategic reflection, and alliance-wide knowledge exchange. It increases the visibility of regional engagement activities, strengthens stakeholder dialogue, and helps institutions identify opportunities for improving strategic coherence, impact measurement, data management, and partnership development.

A key finding was that regional engagement is highly context-specific and cannot be adequately assessed through quantitative indicators alone. The most valuable insights emerged from combining data with qualitative narratives, stakeholder perspectives, and peer review. The Critical Friends approach proved particularly effective in providing external perspectives and fostering mutual learning across the alliance.

Overall, the REA pilot established a strong foundation for scaling regional engagement assessment across E³UDRES². It demonstrates how European University Alliances can strengthen regional development while benefiting from shared learning, benchmarking, and collaboration. The next phase will focus on refining the methodology, strengthening evidence collection, and translating assessment findings into concrete institutional and alliance-level improvements.

¹

1 Introduction

A strong regional focus is one of the key profiling aspects of the E³UDRES² alliance. Each of the E³UDRES² alliance members is strongly embedded within their specific region, thus the E³UDRES² activities should enhance the added value for students, regional actors, as well as member institutions. Therefore, a better understanding of the capacity of individual members, as well as a potential of the entire alliance were important for the E³UDRES² in the stage of its funding between 2023 – 2027.

The E³UDRES² 2.0 project proposal promised to:

- “Develop an approach and methodology for measuring the impact of E³UDRES² and its partners within their regions, yet also on partner institutions’ transformation;
- Pilot the chosen approach for learning about the impact and formulate recommendations for further E³UDRES² development.”

The designated working group considered various tools and approaches. One of the results was a proposed shift from focusing on “regional impact assessment” which may need much more complex and robust analysis, including setting some baseline situation to “regional engagement assessment”. This may better correspond to relatively low experience within the partnership with such type of reflection.

Still, the objective was adjusted only slightly proposing to:

- pilot the regional engagement assessment with regional stakeholders/ecosystem, learn about possible impact and formulate recommendations for further institutional and E³UDRES² development;
- reflect on E³UDRES² member institutions experience while considering a potential context of E³UDRES² alliance.

The activity is intended to feed into further improvement, strategy and capacity building, as well as the E³UDRES² alliance promotion, visibility and attractiveness among relevant regional, national and European partners, as well as internal awareness raising on this particular issue.

2 Methodological Approach

There were several existing tools considered. At the end the decision was to base the reflection around modified UASiMAP guidelines developed for the purpose of self-assessment of regional engagement by EURASHE within the UASiMAP project (Erasmus+ project, 2020 – 2023). The other tools considered, were in particular the HEInnovate ([Home | HEInnovate](#)), the EC and OECD tool for reflection of entrepreneurial universities and TEFCE ([Toolbox - Community engagement in higher education](#)), a tool developed for community engagement reflection. Using also research of the UASiMAP project [UASiMAP – Engagement data from UAS activities | EURASHE](#)) the UASiMAP tool with some slight modification was identified as the most suitable to serve the purpose of complex focus on regional engagement. Still, the E³DRES² experts proposed to run the pilot using the modified UASiMAP guidelines yet use the results also for later reflection based on the HEInnovate. The decision respects the wide range of expertise within the HE Innovate community, supporting tools, yet also the role HEInnovate assessment plays for eligibility to some EC project calls.

The UASiMAP tool provides a guide through a self-reflection of university (of applied sciences) engagement with its regional environment, a complex one or focused on various aspects of

the higher education mission (see the structure of UASiMAP guidelines' chapters – regional strategies, teaching & learning, research, development & innovation, community engagement). The E³UDRES² partners have enhanced the focus on the dimension of the European university alliance and agreed on several basic indicators covering most of the relevant areas.

The university following the process follows the agreed guidelines and based on available data, information and various focused discussions with relevant actors and stakeholders summarise the finding into a self-reflection report.

Table 1: E³UDRES² Regional Engagement Assessment timeline

Date	Action, output	Note
VI.2024	Literature review	Analysis of existing tools for Regional Engagement
VI.2024	Selection of the tool	+ some agreements on possible approach
IX.2024	Process outline, plan	Rough concept, forming a task group
IX.2024	Agreeing on pilot institutions	4 interested institutions (Jamk, USTP, UNIPS, Saxion)
XI.2024	RIA/REA plan of each pilot	Including benefits, resources, capacities, schedule
XI.2024	E3UDRES2 REA guidelines, indicators	Sub-group/WP agree on common indicators and guidelines for pilots
II.2025	Training, peer learning	Training pilot institution staff for UASiMap tool. Online and in person, linked to WP8 meeting
II.2026	Pilot self-assessment reports	Data collection, workshops (<VII.25) Some peer sharing, joint support & exchange
II.2026 – III. 2026	E ³ UDRES ² “critical friend review”	Peer learning, visiting pilot institutions, reflecting on the report and lessons learnt
VI/IX.2026	Summative report, cases & recommendations	Including some feedback to pilot institutions To be approved by the Executive Board

2.1. Regional Engagement Assessment Pilot Process

There are several consecutive stages in the E³UDRES² Regional Engagement Assessment cycle:

- Institutional self-reflection leading to a full, complex description and analysis of the relevant university capacity, achievements and possible areas for improvement;
- Critical friends review – a review run by a group of external “critical friends”, thus more enhancement-oriented reflection of those not engaged with the institution;
- Summative workshop based on critical friends review leading to conclusions, exchange of views, potential recommendations for the university and the E³UDRES² alliance, as well as any observations regarding the methodology and procedures;
- Overall conclusions and recommendations for the E³UDRES² alliance as regards their further strategy and stakeholders’ engagement, balance of roles between the E³UDRES² alliance and its members.

2.2. UASiMap Framework

UASiMAP is a tool designed to help Universities of Applied Sciences strengthen regional engagement. It focuses on four key areas: regional strategies, education and lifelong learning, applied research and innovation, and civic/community involvement. Specifically tailored for UAS (as part of the development of EURASHE members in five countries) and tested with E³UDRES² experts between 2019 and 2021, it provides a proven framework for fostering regional collaboration.

The UASiMAP analysis is based on 4 major dimensions defined in the model, as shown in the diagram below.

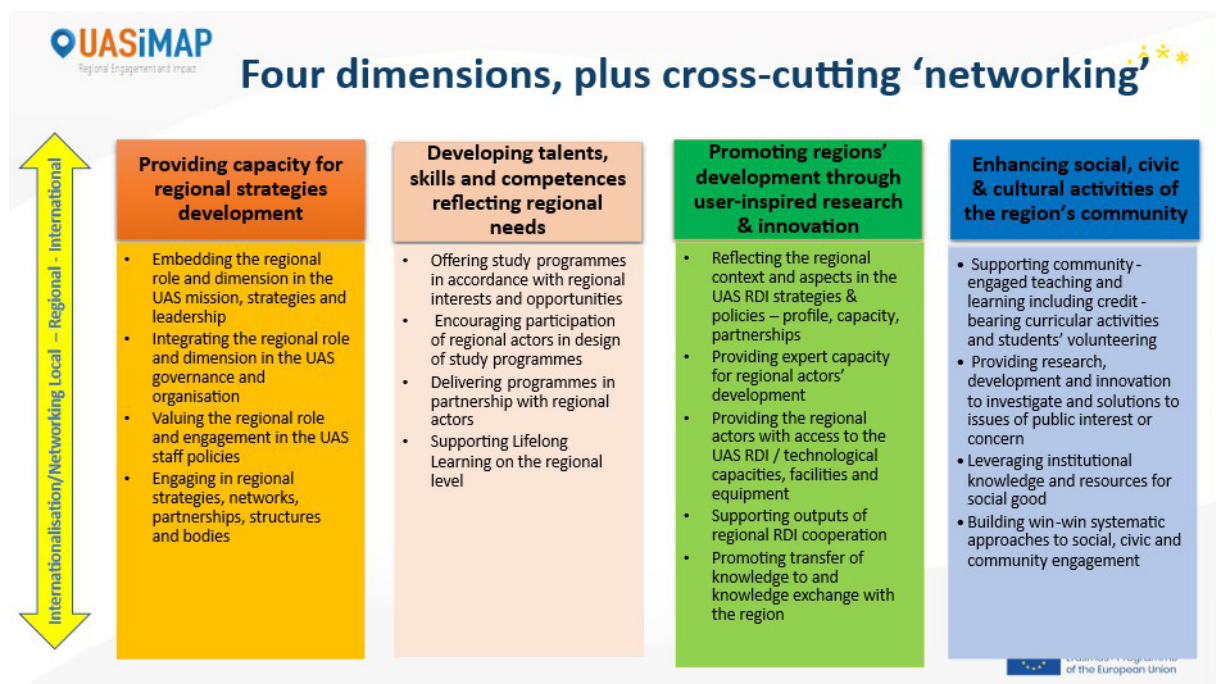


Figure 1. UASiMap four dimensions

The UASiMAP Framework is a structured methodology developed under the Erasmus+ program to assess and enhance the regional engagement of Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS). It is based on self-reflection, combined with stakeholder consultation, where each institution evaluates its performance across four key dimensions:

- Regional Strategies – How the UAS aligns its mission and activities with regional development goals.

- Education and Lifelong Learning – The extent to which programs and initiatives meet regional workforce needs and promote continuous learning.
- Applied Research and Innovation – The contribution of research activities to regional innovation systems and industry collaboration.
- Civic and Community Involvement – Engagement with society through cultural, social, and sustainability initiatives.

The framework uses a scoring system from 1 to 5, where Level 5 indicates excellence with no improvements needed. Level 3 reflects positive aspects, but there is significant room for improvement. Level 1 corresponds to a situation where the question asked is not fulfilled at all. Each score must be supported by evidence, such as data, examples, and documented practices. In addition, the pilot team adopted indicators for each dimension based on experience with the methodology and on the existing literature on HEI/UAS regional relationships and proposed metrics.

The application of this methodology requires the participation of the academic community and regional partners, both in the self-reflection process and in the collection of data for building the indicators. It is a time-consuming and resource-intensive task to obtain a realistic view of the impact of UAS on the region. Still, since it is carried out in phases, as shown in the UASiMAP process below, it also allows existing gaps to be addressed and ensures that, in the future, it becomes a more routine task.

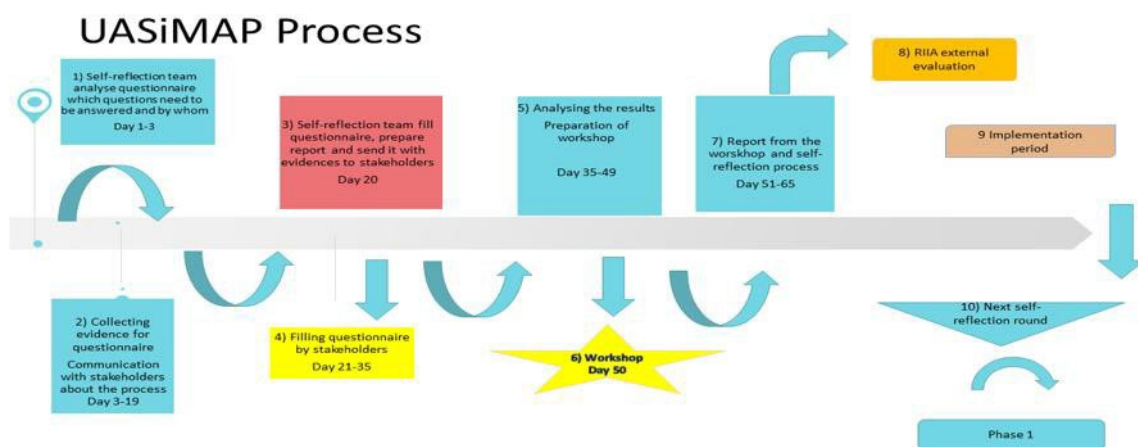


Figure 2. UASiMAP Process

After the pilot institutions submitted their preliminary reports, subsequent phases followed, as outlined below, and are scheduled to conclude by the end of 2026.

Table 1. E³UDRES² REA pilot timetable

Time	Action	Note
III. – IV. 2026	“Critical friends” review	External experts as part of the critical friends. Visits to pilots. Planned by autumn 2025
V. 2026	Individual institutions’ review, stories	Peer groups (review), pilot institutions (cases)

< VII. 2026	Guidelines review	WP8 Quality
IX.2026	Final report	
	Promotion	Promotion within and beyond E ³ UDRES ²

2.3. Indicators

To support the Regional Engagement Assessment (REA), the pilot institutions used a set of indicators derived from the UASiMAP framework and further refined through discussions within the E³UDRES² alliance. The purpose of these indicators was not to create a ranking or benchmarking system, but rather to support evidence-informed reflection, increase the visibility of regional engagement activities, and provide a structured basis for institutional learning and strategic development.

The indicator framework covered the four UASiMAP dimensions:

- regional strategies,
- education and lifelong learning,
- user-inspired research and innovation, and
- social, civic and community engagement.

A concept for a common alliance-wide basic indicator set was also developed, including indicators related to regional student recruitment, internships, graduate retention, regional partnerships, research cooperation and community outreach. However, during the pilot phase it became evident that the collection of fully comparable quantitative data across institutions was not yet feasible due to differences in institutional systems, definitions, regional contexts and data availability. Consequently, the assessment relied primarily on a combination of qualitative narratives, selected quantitative evidence and stakeholder perspectives.

3 Mapping Regional Engagement: Self-assessment of 4 pilots

Four of the E³UDRES² member institutions agreed to pilot the methodology and go through the entire cycle as defined above:

- University of Applied Sciences St. Pölten, Austria (USTP)
- Jamk University of Applied Sciences, Finland (Jamk)
- Polytechnic University Setúbal, Portugal (UNIPS)
- Saxion University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands (Saxion)

Findings from the pilots are presented in following sub-chapters.

3.1. University of Applied Sciences St. Pölten (USTP)

3.1.1. About USTP and its specifics

The University of Applied Sciences St. Pölten (USTP) is a medium-sized Austrian university of applied sciences with a strong focus on practice-oriented education, applied research, innovation and regional engagement. With more than 4,000 students and over 250 full-time academic staff members, USTP combines an interdisciplinary academic portfolio with a close connection to regional stakeholders in business, public administration and civil society. The university covers a broad range of disciplines including digital technologies, media and communication, management, entrepreneurship, health sciences, social sciences and social work, railway technology, as well as safety and security studies. This multidisciplinary profile enables USTP to address complex societal challenges through integrated and cross-disciplinary approaches.

A distinctive characteristic of USTP is its strong regional embedding. The institution is majority-owned by the City of St. Pölten, while the Province of Lower Austria is a significant co-owner. This governance structure creates a direct institutional linkage between the university and regional development priorities. Regional engagement is explicitly embedded in the university's mission and strategic orientation, which aims to contribute to smart and sustainable regional development through education, research and innovation. At the same time, USTP maintains a strong European orientation. As coordinating institution of the E³UDRES² European University Alliance, the university actively contributes to transnational cooperation in higher education, challenge-based learning, applied research and regional innovation. Through E³UDRES², USTP connects local and regional challenges with European networks and knowledge ecosystems, positioning itself as a university that is locally anchored while internationally connected.

The university's research profile is characterised by applied and user-oriented research conducted in close cooperation with companies, public organisations and civil society actors. Strong involvement in regional innovation ecosystems, Digital Innovation Hubs, cluster initiatives and entrepreneurship support structures further reinforces USTP's role as a regional development actor and innovation partner.

3.1.2. Defined region of USTP

Within the framework of the Regional Engagement Assessment (REA), USTP adopts a differentiated and functional understanding of "region". Rather than relying solely on administrative boundaries, the university defines its region based on actual patterns of interaction, mobility, cooperation and governance.

The primary region (A-Region) is the federal province of Lower Austria. This region represents USTP's central institutional, political and financial reference framework. The university is located in the provincial capital St. Pölten and is structurally linked to Lower Austria through its ownership, governance structures and strategic partnerships. More than half of the student population originates from Lower Austria, and many graduates remain in the region after graduation, contributing to regional labour market development and innovation capacity.

Lower Austria also represents the most important stakeholder landscape for the university. USTP cooperates with municipalities, public bodies, enterprises, educational institutions and civil society organisations across the province. The university actively participates in regional

innovation ecosystems and collaborates with organisations such as ecoplus, accent, the House of Digitalisation, Digital Innovation Hubs and regional cluster initiatives.

In addition, USTP defines an extended region (B-Region) consisting of Lower Austria and the City of Vienna. This reflects the strong socio-economic interdependencies between the two territories. Around one-third of students live in Vienna, and a considerable proportion of staff commute from Vienna to St. Pölten. Furthermore, many research collaborations, innovation activities and graduate career pathways operate within this broader functional region. For the purpose of the REA, Lower Austria serves as the main focus for data collection and analysis, while the extended Lower Austria-Vienna region is considered for indicators where cross-regional dynamics are particularly relevant, such as student mobility, employment outcomes, staff recruitment and research partnerships. This tiered approach allows the university to capture regional engagement as a dynamic and relational process rather than as a static territorial category.

3.1.3. Conclusions of USTP self-assessment

The Regional Engagement Assessment pilot confirms that regional engagement is deeply embedded in the mission, governance, teaching, research and community activities of the University of Applied Sciences St. Pölten. The self-assessment demonstrated that USTP already acts as a strong regional anchor institution, characterised by extensive collaboration with public authorities, companies, civil-society organisations and innovation intermediaries throughout Lower Austria and the wider Eastern Austrian region. Regional engagement is not an isolated activity but an integral element of the university's identity and day-to-day operations.

Dimension I: Regional Strategies

USTP's regional anchoring is reflected in its mission, governance structures, stakeholder relationships and strategic planning processes. Its ownership structure, close relationships with the City of St. Pölten and the Province of Lower Austria, and active participation in regional innovation ecosystems provide a strong institutional foundation for regional engagement. At the same time, the assessment process revealed an important institutional learning: while regional engagement activities are abundant and diverse, they have often evolved organically through project-based initiatives, individual networks and long-standing partnerships rather than through one overarching regional engagement framework. The assessment therefore highlighted a need to complement strong bottom-up practices with a more explicit institutional narrative that clearly connects regional challenges, target groups, activities and intended impacts. Given the size and diversity of Lower Austria, this also requires a differentiated understanding of the needs and capacities of its various subregions and target groups, while taking account of USTP's functional connections to Vienna and the wider Eastern Austrian region.

A further key insight concerns visibility and evidence. The REA process made many regional engagement activities visible that had previously remained fragmented across faculties, research groups and service units. Participants repeatedly noted that the institution possesses a much richer portfolio of regional engagement activities than is currently documented or communicated. At the same time, the assessment identified limitations in data availability, impact measurement and monitoring systems. Strengthening institutional mechanisms for collecting, consolidating and analysing regional engagement data therefore emerged as one

of the most important development priorities. More systematic use of evidence, success stories, and documented achievements could also raise awareness of USTP's existing capacities and contributions among both internal and external stakeholders. Future development may therefore benefit from more differentiated approaches for addressing the needs of specific regional ecosystems, stakeholder groups and subregions within Lower Austria.

Dimension II: Education and Lifelong Learning

USTP's education and lifelong learning activities are strongly connected to regional labour-market needs and professional practice. Through its broad academic portfolio in fields such as media, digital technologies, health sciences, social sciences and social work, management and business, the university contributes to the development of skilled professionals across a wide range of regionally relevant sectors. Needs-and-acceptance analyses, advisory boards, dual-study formats, mandatory internships and the extensive involvement of practitioners in teaching help ensure the regional relevance of study programmes. Challenge-based and work-based learning formats also enable students to address real-world challenges together with companies, public institutions and civil-society organisations. Lifelong learning activities reach a broad regional audience and contribute to reskilling and upskilling in the region. Nevertheless, the assessment identified potential for more systematic needs analysis and stronger evidence of the long-term effects of these activities on participants, organisations and regional skills development. The involvement of regional actors in programme design and teaching is well established, but their participation in assessment and evaluation processes could be further formalised.

Dimension III: User-Inspired Research, Development and Innovation

The assessment highlighted that USTP benefits from a broad and trusted stakeholder network and is increasingly recognised as an innovation and knowledge-transfer partner in the region. Stakeholders described the university as an accessible and responsive actor that contributes expertise to regional development processes, innovation initiatives and societal challenges. Applied and user-inspired research is supported through cooperation with companies, public institutions, innovation intermediaries and civil-society organisations, as well as through co-creation formats and access to specialised research infrastructures. Digital Innovation Hubs, research centres, laboratories, test-before-invest environments and student-driven projects provide regional actors with opportunities to access expertise, technologies and facilities and to develop solutions to concrete regional challenges. These activities contribute particularly to strengthening regional innovation and digitalisation capacities, including those of SMEs and public-sector organisations. However, the assessment also indicated that the visibility of regional RDI outcomes varies across activities and organisational units. Stakeholder management, communication channels and partnership monitoring could be further systematised to improve transparency and support long-term collaboration. While many initiatives generate visible benefits, USTP currently lacks a consolidated approach for tracking and demonstrating their long-term effects on regional innovation, organisations and communities.

Dimension IV: Social, Civic and Community Engagement

USTP's social, civic and community engagement is reflected in community-engaged teaching, socially relevant research, inclusion-focused initiatives, public science activities and the

provision of university facilities for regional communities. Students and staff contribute to public-interest initiatives in areas such as inclusion, diversity, neighbourhood development, health and civic participation, while regional actors gain access to expertise, infrastructure and collaborative learning environments. The university's community-oriented services extend beyond science communication and public events. Open access to library services, laboratories, media facilities, local broadcasting and other campus infrastructures creates additional interfaces between USTP and its regional environment. Together with cooperation involving civic organisations, these activities strengthen knowledge exchange and relationships between the university and its regional communities and position USTP as an active contributor to social cohesion and community wellbeing. Although social and civic engagement activities are diverse and well established in several parts of the university, volunteering opportunities and institutional structures for planning, recognising and monitoring community engagement are not yet consistently developed across all programmes and organisational units. The assessment therefore highlighted the potential to establish a more unified framework for student volunteering, improve evidence collection relating to community impact and strengthen the long-term governance of social and civic engagement.

Overall a particularly valuable outcome of the pilot was the opportunity for institutional reflection and peer learning. The combination of self-assessment, stakeholder dialogue and Critical Friends Reviews provided new perspectives on USTP's strengths, challenges and future development potential. The assessment confirmed USTP's strong regional embeddedness across all four dimensions while also highlighting the need for greater strategic coherence, visibility, impact monitoring and evidence-based management of regional engagement activities. Looking ahead, the key challenge is not to create additional activities, but to further strengthen their coordination, visibility and demonstrable contribution to regional development. In this regard, E³UDRES² provides an important framework for continued peer learning, benchmarking and capacity building, while the experiences and lessons emerging from USTP's regional engagement practices can also contribute to the further development of alliance-wide approaches to regional engagement and regional development.

3.2. Polytechnic University of Setúbal (UNIPS)

3.2.1. About UNIPS and its specifics

The Polytechnic University of Setúbal (UNIPS) is a Portuguese public higher education institution and is part of the polytechnic system. The Portuguese higher education system is binary, composed of universities and polytechnic institutes. Universities are primarily focused on research and knowledge creation, while polytechnic institutes are more oriented towards applied research addressing concrete challenges.

UNIPS was founded on October 14, 1979, in the context of establishing the polytechnic education network in Portugal, with the aim of qualifying the Portuguese population and promoting regional economic development. Today, UNIPS comprises five schools, listed in order of creation:

1. School of Technology of Setúbal
2. School of Education
3. School of Business Sciences

4. School of Health

5. School of Technology of Barreiro

These five schools provide education and conduct research in various scientific areas, including Engineering, Technology, Social Sciences, Education, Sports, Business Sciences, and Health.

Currently, UNIPS has approximately 9,400 students distributed across its scientific areas in more than ninety programs, including higher professional technical courses, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and postgraduate programs. Over its history, UNIPS has graduated more than 39,000 students, highlighting its contribution to professional qualification and regional and national development. The academic community consists of around 730 faculty and researchers responsible for knowledge production and dissemination, and 170 non-teaching staff who provide essential technical and administrative support for the functioning of the institution.

3.2.2. Defined region of UNIPS

Four of the institution's schools are based in Setúbal: Setúbal Higher School of Technology (ESTSetúbal), Higher School of Education (ESE), Higher School of Business Sciences (ESCE) and Higher School of Health (ESS). In Barreiro, a city 38 kilometers from Setúbal, the 5th school is located: Barreiro Higher School of Technology (ESTBarreiro).

In Sines, 130 kilometers south of Setúbal, a new school will be created offering undergraduate degrees, master's degrees, postgraduate degrees and short two-year courses. But currently, UNIPS already offers training in this city, in short courses, using different educational spaces and company spaces.

In addition to the three municipalities—Setúbal, Barreiro, and Sines—where UNIPS educational institutions are located, the district encompasses several other municipalities, totaling thirteen in all. The UNIPS area of influence is extending from the southern bank of the Tagus River to Sines and is equivalent to the District of Setúbal.

The UNIPS's strategy is based on its contribution to sustainable development, the development of informed citizens, good research, innovation, and management practices, social responsibility, and international partnerships. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) guide all our activities.

The Setúbal district has a diverse and growing economy, led by the tertiary and manufacturing sectors, with Volkswagen AutoEuropa as the main employer and exporter. Tourism is expanding, and although the primary sector is small, agriculture and fishing remain important. The district also plays a key role in the automotive, industrial, and logistics sectors, supported by the Port of Sines.

With nearly 903,000 residents in 2023, mostly in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, the region is expanding demographically. UNIPS operates within this dynamic context, maintaining strong links with local companies, supporting innovation through internships, services, and research output. Its governance involves regional stakeholders, although higher education in Portugal remains centrally managed by the national government.

3.2.3. Conclusions of UNIPS self-assessment

The regional development is a core priority of the institution, yet it seems that – also due to its service to young people, businesses, institutions and municipalities belonging to different administrative territories – regional partners increasingly expect UNIPS to play an even more active and visible role as a connector within the region and beyond. This expectation stems from IPS's unique position at the intersection of education, applied research, innovation, and civic engagement, as well as its extensive network of relationships with municipalities, companies, schools, research centers, social organizations, and public authorities. Through its active involvement in regional governance and multi-stakeholder cooperation frameworks, the institution contributes to initiatives related to regional competitiveness, sustainable development, social cohesion, innovation, and knowledge transfer, evidencing its capacity to facilitate dialogue and collaboration among key actors in the territory.

Considering the findings of this evaluation, a set of strategic recommendations is proposed, focusing on the following priority areas for action:

Strengthening the mutual links between various actors, respecting diversity within the key target area while leveraging proximity to the Lisbon Metropolitan Area

The institution should further consolidate its role as a connector between knowledge, society and regional development by fostering stronger collaboration among local communities, municipalities, public services, civil society organizations, cultural actors and economic stakeholders. Such collaboration should acknowledge the diversity of the region, including its urban, industrial, coastal and rural characteristics, while recognizing the opportunities arising from its proximity to the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. Through applied research, participatory initiatives, community-based projects and volunteering activities, the institution can contribute to building trust, encouraging knowledge exchange and promoting more integrated and sustainable territorial development.

Maintaining and further strengthening the institution's distinctive profile and areas of excellence

The institution should continue to invest in the fields that distinguish it within the national and international higher education landscape, while reinforcing emerging areas with strong societal relevance. This includes promoting applied and challenge-based research, strengthening interdisciplinary approaches, and creating opportunities for students and researchers to engage with real-world problems. By maintaining a close relationship with regional needs and capitalizing on its unique educational offer, the institution can further enhance its reputation as a reference for practice-oriented teaching, innovation and societal impact.

Anticipating future needs rather than focusing solely on existing demands

The institution should position itself as a forward-looking actor capable of identifying and responding to future social, economic, environmental, and technological challenges. This requires systematic dialogue with businesses, public institutions, communities, and regional authorities, combined with evidence generated through applied research and foresight activities. By identifying emerging trends and skills requirements, the institution can adapt its educational provision, research agenda and community engagement activities to support long-term regional resilience, sustainability and competitiveness.

Increasing awareness among SMEs and other stakeholders of the institution's expertise and capacity

Although the institution possesses significant expertise in education, applied research and knowledge transfer, this potential may not always be fully recognized by regional stakeholders, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises. A more proactive and accessible engagement strategy should therefore be developed, highlighting successful collaborations, practical solutions and opportunities for cooperation. The institution can reinforce its visibility through innovation support services, demonstration projects, living labs, consultancy activities and regular interaction with businesses, thereby strengthening its contribution to regional innovation ecosystems.

Reinforcing community engagement and volunteering as strategic dimensions of institutional development

Community engagement and volunteering should be recognized not only as complementary activities but also as strategic pillars of the institution's mission. By creating more opportunities for students, staff and external stakeholders to engage in social, cultural, environmental and educational initiatives, the institution can strengthen its contribution to social cohesion and civic participation. These activities also provide valuable opportunities for experiential learning, knowledge co-creation and mutual learning between academia and society, reinforcing the institution's role as an anchor institution within the region.

Using the E³UDRES² European University alliance as a platform for exchange, experimentation and internationalization

The E³UDRES² European University alliance should be leveraged as a strategic platform for sharing good practices, developing innovative educational methodologies and expanding international collaboration. Participation in the alliance can support the institution's ambitions in applied research, challenge-based learning, regional engagement and social innovation, while creating opportunities for students, researchers and staff to work within international networks. At the same time, the alliance offers a unique opportunity to bring local and regional challenges to a European stage, ensuring that internationalization strengthens rather than replaces the institution's commitment to its communities and territory.

Concluding recommendation

Taken together, these priorities suggest a development model that combines academic excellence, applied research, community engagement, volunteering, international collaboration and strong territorial rootedness. Such an approach would enable the institution to reinforce its distinctive identity while increasing its contribution to sustainable regional development and societal well-being.

Dimension I: Regional Strategies

UNIPS's strategic orientation clearly reflects its regional commitment, embedded in its mission, vision, values and Strategic Plan – Horizon 2030. Regional development is explicitly identified as a strategic axis, and the institution positions itself as a connector at regional and international levels. UNIPS engages regional partners through councils, committees, collaborative platforms (e.g., Dinamiza; Vamos Pensar o Território) and participation in regional planning bodies. External stakeholders are integrated into governance structures, notably in the General Council and School Councils. Although planning and governance mechanisms are well structured.

Dimension II: Education and Lifelong Learning

UNIPS systematically aligns its educational offer with regional needs, actively involving employers and organisations in the design, evaluation and monitoring of study programmes. Monitoring Committees with external representatives ensure ongoing relevance to the labour market. Short-cycle programmes (CTeSP) and micro-credentials respond directly to regional challenges, and the institution demonstrates strong results in regional demand and graduate employability, with most students originating from and remaining in the Setúbal–Lisbon area. Lifelong learning is an institutional priority, supported by flexible access routes (M23, professional pathways), diverse micro-credentials, upskilling programmes (e.g., UPskill), and extensive evening-course provision tailored to regional labour market needs.

Dimension III: User-Inspired Research, Development and Innovation

UNIPS integrates research, development and innovation (RDI) into its mission as essential components for regional progress. Its RDI policy emphasises applied research aligned with regional socio-economic priorities, knowledge transfer and participation in national and international networks. Academic staff, students and researchers participate in applied projects, external consultancy, technical services and partnerships with regional organisations. UNIPS contributes significantly to regional innovation through PRR-funded Mobilising Agendas such as NEXUS, Aero.Next Portugal, Produtech R3 and Drivolution, as well as through specialised fields like aquaculture and emerging technologies. Facilities such as laboratories, simulation centres and specialised infrastructures support collaborative RDI, though access and monitoring of external use are not yet fully systematised. UNIPS also supports innovation through UNIPStartUp, entrepreneurship training and the Poliempreende competition.

Dimension IV: Social, Civic and Community Engagement

UNIPS demonstrates a robust commitment to social and civic engagement through cultural events, scientific outreach, community activities and open-campus practices. Undergraduate programmes include credit-bearing civic engagement components, and UNIPS Solidário supports volunteering, inclusivity, and social responsibility — recognised nationally with the Academia Voluntária Quality Seal (2022, 2024). Regional social needs are integrated into programme design (especially CTeSP), and ongoing collaboration with organisations ensures continuous alignment with community challenges. Students engage in service-learning activities in health, education, and social sectors, while the Academic Association organises civic-oriented initiatives (e.g., beach clean-ups, tree planting).

Overall, UNIPS demonstrates a strong and coherent regional commitment across governance, education, RDI and civic engagement. Its partnerships, applied learning, community activities and innovation projects create tangible value for the Setúbal region and beyond. Strengthening systematisation, impact measurement and resource allocation will enable the institution to further amplify its contribution to regional development

3.3. Jamk University of Applied Sciences (Jamk)

3.3.1. About Jamk and its specifics

Jamk University of Applied Sciences is an international, practice-oriented higher education institution located in Central Finland, with campuses in Jyväskylä and Saarijärvi. Jamk has approximately 9 500 students and about 900 staff members. The basic tasks of Jamk are:

- to provide higher education based on the requirements of working life
- to carry out applied research, development and innovation activities (RDI) that serve education and support the world of work and regional development

- to organise continuing education to sustain and promote lifelong learning in working life.

Jamk has strong international profile offering bachelor's and master's degrees in English across fields such as ICT, business, engineering, nursing, tourism, and more. Jamk has a wide network of global partners and a significant number of international students.

Jamk is known for practical, work-life-oriented education, where degree programmes focus on real-world skills through internships, projects, and simulations. Nursing and other health programmes emphasize clinical practice, simulation labs, and hands-on environments and many programs include close collaboration with companies in Central Finland. Learning environments are designed to be flexible, technology-rich, and practice-focused, with open lounges and group-study spaces.

Jamk has five main focus areas that guide the education, research, development and innovation activities:

1. Cyber Security: Developing expertise in digital security, cyber resilience, and protection against modern cyber threats.
2. Physical Activity and Well-being: Researching and promoting physical activity, health, and well-being across different population groups.
3. Multidisciplinary Rehabilitation: Developing innovative rehabilitation services and practices together with healthcare providers and working life partners.
4. Sustainable Bioeconomy and Energy Solutions: Advancing climate goals through sustainable use of natural resources, renewable energy, and circular economy solutions
5. Industry Renewal: Supporting industrial companies in digitalization, automation, real-time data utilization, and green transition.

In addition, Jamk identifies Game Technologies and Esports and Innovative Learning as important emerging areas of expertise that support its profile and development activities. These focus areas are central to Jamk's Strategy 2035 and are aligned with the development needs of Central Finland and its business and public-sector partners.

3.3.2. Defined region of Jamk

23 universities of applied sciences in Finland have been spread across the 19 provinces of Finland. Therefore, the province UAS is located at forms a natural region for the UAS. Jamk University of Applied Sciences is located in the province of Central Finland.

The Central Finland lies slightly south of the geographical centre of Finland. The landscape is hilly and a large part of the province belongs to the Finnish Lakeland. The province of Central Finland consists of 22 municipalities.

Central Finland is a province whose economy combines traditional industries and new technologies. Traditional industries, such as forestry; paper, metal and wood product manufacturing; and machinery production are well represented in Central Finland. The province also invests heavily in future growth sectors. There are companies specialising in information and communication technology, energy and environmental technology, and wellness, as well as nanotechnology.

Central Finland is located at the centre of the logistical nodes in Finland, and the province is traversed by a comprehensive network of transport infrastructure. The largest city in Central

Finland is Jyväskylä, which has around 140,000 inhabitants and 7,740 offices, and provides approximately 60,000 jobs. Every year some 700 new companies are set up in Jyväskylä.

3.3.3. Conclusions of Jamk self-assessment

Jamk University of Applied Sciences demonstrates a highly integrated, strategically grounded, and operationally mature model of regional engagement, extending across governance, education, RDI, staff policies, community partnerships, and societal impact.

Dimension I: Regional Strategies

Jamk University of Applied Sciences has embedded regional engagement as a core element of its mission, strategy, governance, human resource practices, and operational activities. Jamk Strategy 2035 prioritizes the development of Central Finland through broad collaboration and long-term partnerships. At the governance and organizational level, Jamk has established a systematic and mature framework for regional cooperation. Stakeholder engagement is coordinated across all Schools. Recruitment, particularly for leadership, teaching, and RDI positions, emphasizes regional cooperation competencies. Staff development is supported through structured training plans, mentoring, networking opportunities, project-based learning, and continuous professional development. Jamk is a major regional development actor in Central Finland, aligning its strategic focus areas with regional priorities and leading extensive RDI activities. Through strong partnerships, participation in innovation ecosystems, and expert roles in regional forums, Jamk actively drives competitiveness, renewal, and long-term sustainable growth in the region.

Dimension II: Education and Lifelong Learning

Jamk integrates regional collaboration directly into its curricula through the Future Factory model, ensuring students work on real company challenges while strengthening local innovation. Strategic partnerships with major regional organizations, degree-specific advisory boards, and strong graduate tracking systems ensure that education, foresight, and workforce development remain closely aligned with Central Finland's needs. Strong cooperation with regional employers, legally required staff expertise, advisory boards, and a stakeholder-driven quality assurance system ensure that programmes remain relevant to Central Finland's labour market. Jamk is a major regional driver of lifelong learning in Central Finland, offering a broad, flexible ecosystem of continuous education that supports reskilling, upskilling, and career transitions.

Dimension III: User-Inspired Research, Development and Innovation

Jamk's RDI strategy is explicitly shaped by the needs, capacities, and opportunities of Central Finland. Regional industries and public actors strongly influence RDI priorities, focus areas, and development processes. Strategic choices—such as cybersecurity, bioeconomy, and digitalisation—reflect regional strengths, while shared initiatives with local partners ensure that RDI activities drive innovation, business renewal, and long-term regional development. Jamk provides substantial expert capacity to regional actors in Central Finland through its RDI activities, partnerships, and applied expertise. With a large project portfolio, extensive collaboration network, and focus areas aligned with regional strengths, Jamk plays a measurable role in strengthening the regional economy.

Dimension IV: Social, Civic and Community Engagement

Jamk embeds community-engaged learning into curricula and partnerships, ensuring student work contributes directly to the wellbeing and renewal of Central Finland. Jamk systematically investigates regional societal needs—such as inclusion, equity, accessibility, and community wellbeing—and integrates this analysis into its policies, decision-making, and RDI activities. Through equality and accessibility assessments, applied research projects, and cooperation with municipalities and NGOs, Jamk generates research-based solutions to issues of public interest.

Overall, Jamk is a strongly regionally engaged University of Applied Sciences. Its strategic alignment, strong governance structures, stakeholder-driven culture, extensive educational and RDI activities, and commitment to community wellbeing demonstrate a comprehensive and sustainable approach to regional development. The institution is well positioned to continue serving as a key driver of innovation, talent development, ecosystem building, and societal impact in Central Finland.

3.4. Saxion University of Applied Sciences (Saxion)

3.4.1. About Saxion and its specifics

Saxion University of Applied Sciences is one of the larger Dutch institutions of higher education located in the eastern part of the Netherlands, with three campuses in Enschede, Deventer, and Apeldoorn and over 25,000 students. Saxion offers more than 100 bachelor's and master's degree programs across domains such as technology, health, social work, business, law, hospitality and the creative industries, including several English-taught programs that attract international students from more than 80 countries.

Saxion roots date back to 1875, though its modern form was established in 1998 following a merger of two educational institutions: Hogeschool Enschede and Hogeschool IJsseland. Today, Saxion emphasises practice-oriented education in close connection with the world of work and the regional innovation ecosystem. The core concept of Living Technology expresses how technological innovation intersects with people, society, and the environment, and serves as the integrative lens connecting education, applied research, and societal relevance.

Strategically, the Saxion Strategic Plan 2025–2030 frames student success and wellbeing, the societal relevance of education, research on regional transitions, and a results-oriented professional culture as key priorities. This orientation translates into strong work-based learning (internships, practice-based projects), embedded collaboration with companies, municipalities, care organisations and civil-society actors, and the development of lectorates, field labs, innovation hubs and learning communities through which applied research and cocreation address regional and national transitions.

Saxion's international orientation is explicitly positioned to serve regional development. Within the E³UDRES² (E3UDRES2, n.d.) European University Alliance, Saxion connects local priorities to European agendas through Living Labs, challenge-based education formats, stakeholder forums and joint RDI initiatives. Hosting events such as the E³UDRES² Stakeholders Forum and Spring Summit brings European perspectives to the campuses and supports mutual learning with regional partners. In line with the Strategic Plan, Saxion develops English-taught trajectories in sectors with labour shortages to attract and retain international

talent for the region, while strengthening Dutch-language acquisition to enable effective participation in the local labour market.

Digitalisation and the responsible use of emerging technologies are embedded across education and research. Saxion adapts curricula and assessments to developments such as AI, aligns with national innovation programmes (e.g., Npuls (Nplus, n.d.)) and integrates public value considerations (autonomy, human dignity, fairness) into the application of new technologies, consistent with its Living Technology framing.

Overall, Saxion presents a coherent institutional profile: a practice-oriented, regionally engaged and internationally connected university that leverages Living Technology and strong partner networks to prepare students for changing professions, contribute to regional transitions, and co-create societal value. Section 4.2 elaborates on Saxion's defined regions and how this strategic orientation is grounded in the Stedendriehoek, Twente and Achterhoek.

3.4.2. Defined region of Saxion

This REA focuses on Saxion's primary area of impact in East and Central Netherlands, defined as the Stedendriehoek and the Twente and Achterhoek regions. These regions reflect Saxion's campus footprint, partner ecosystems and strategic priorities. Boundaries are indicative and functional rather than strictly administrative: cross-regional and cross-border collaborations are included where they are anchored in these ecosystems and demonstrably serve them.

Stedendriehoek (Apeldoorn–Deventer– Zutphen)

The Stedendriehoek is host to two Saxion locations (Apeldoorn and Deventer) and a dense network of public, private and civic partners. Its thematic emphases include safety and digitalisation (Apeldoorn) and sustainability, circularity, and spatial development (Deventer), in line with Saxion's Strategic Plan 2025–2030.

Twente (including Enschede/Hengelo/Almelo, and surrounding municipalities)

Twente is the home to the Enschede campus and a technology-oriented innovation ecosystem. It aligns closely with Saxion's Living Technology profile, practice-based RDI, field labs, and collaborations with partners such as the University of Twente and ROC van Twente.

Achterhoek (e.g., Doetinchem, Winterswijk and surrounding municipalities)

The Achterhoek is closely connected to Saxion's applied research, lifelong learning and workbased learning activities that support regional labour market needs and societal transitions.

Rationale for regional delineation

The three campuses (Enschede, Deventer, Apeldoorn) position Saxion as a regional anchor across these areas. The Strategic Plan 2025–2030 prioritises regional value creation through Living Technology, student success and wellbeing, expansion of research, and the integration of education–research–innovation, with explicit accents per location (technology in Enschede; safety/digitalisation in Apeldoorn; sustainability/circularity/spatial development in Deventer). Long-standing collaborations with municipalities, companies, care organisations, knowledge institutions, and civil society actors (e.g., the Centre for Security and Digitalisation in Apeldoorn; collaborations with the University of Twente and ROC van Twente in Twente; and Leefbare Stad and Aventus in Deventer) illustrate Saxion's embeddedness in existing ecosystems and partnerships. Demographic change, skills shortages, and transitions in sustainability and digitalisation drive programme portfolios, work-based learning, and applied

research across the three regions, demonstrating their connection to labour market and societal needs.

Cross-border and wider connections

Saxion participates in cross-border Dutch–German collaborations, such as the Euregio (EUREGIO, n.d.), that connect regional priorities to broader European dynamics. These are included in the REA when they are anchored in and serve the defined regions. Participation in European networks and programmes aligns local priorities with EU agendas and enables challenge-based education, joint RDI and stakeholder forums that feed back into regional ecosystems. E³UDRES² positively influences this European scaling.

Implications for UASiMAP scoping and reporting

Activities are coded as “regional” when they (1) primarily serve actors in Stedendriehoek, Twente or Achterhoek; (2) are conducted in/for these regions; or (3) are demonstrably embedded in their ecosystems (e.g., long-term partnerships, field labs, Centres of Expertise). Since boundaries are functional, activities spanning multiple regions are attributed to all relevant regions with transparent notes on scope and partners.

3.4.3. Conclusions of Saxion self-assessment

Saxion’s regional engagement presents a coherent profile across the four UASiMAP dimensions (UASiMAP for Self-Reflection Tool, n.d.). The UAS is deeply embedded in East and Central Netherlands, guided by a clear regional mission and the integrative concept of Living Technology, and supported by partner interfaces that connect education, user-inspired RDI and civic engagement. European collaboration through E³UDRES² adds capacity and peer learning, while the Strategic Plan 2025–2030 (Saxion, 2024) anchors ambitions to improve student success, expand and renew the education offer, grow practice-oriented research and cultivate a results-oriented professional culture. Together, these elements demonstrate a mature, evolving practice.

For **Dimension I** (Providing Capacity for Regional Strategy Development), Saxion articulates a clear mission, operates campus hubs as regional anchors and sustains an active governance and professional culture, with growing partner engagement. The self-reported UASiMAP (UASiMAP for Self-Reflection Tool, n.d.) score of 3.5 suggests solid capacity with room for further standardisation. Quantitatively, employer involvement in RDI and the number of regional collaborations illustrate a wide and expanding regional footprint.

Dimension II (Developing Talents, Skills and Competencies reflecting Regional Needs) is broadly aligned with labour-market demand and societal challenges. Work-based learning is integrated at scale, and stakeholder voice is structurally involved in quality assurance.

Dimension III (Promoting Regional Development through User-Inspired RDI) is organised through lectorates, Centres of Expertise, field labs, Smart Industry facilities, learning communities and joint hubs, with priorities in sustainability and circularity, digitalisation and security, health and wellbeing and human-centred AI. Partner engagement is extensive, and adoption is supported through entrepreneurship, external facility use and active communication. European collaboration via E³UDRES², through living labs, hackathons, bootcamps, and events such as the Spring Summit 2025 in Enschede, reinforces user-inspired design and diffusion, with cross-border Euregio (EUREGIO, n.d.) initiatives included when demonstrably anchored in Saxion’s defined regions.

Dimension IV (Enhancing Social, Civic and Community Engagement) is expanding through community-engaged learning and public-oriented initiatives. Engagement formats include citizen-involved projects in living labs, civic hackathons and open events/science festivals, with responsible digitalisation woven through activities by making public values explicit when applying new technologies.

Overall, Saxion combines mission clarity, partner density and integrative infrastructures with growing European linkages. To make contributions consistently visible and comparable across academies, further professionalisation of evidence, harmonisation of definitions and standardisation of monitoring are needed.

4 Critical Friend Reviews

The “Critical friends’ review” supports the pilot institutions’ self-reflection by providing a more-or-less impartial view on the description and analysis provided within the self-reflection report and enhanced by conversations with various groups of the most relevant stakeholders. The aim is to:

- Benefit from final conclusions, yet within the “critical friends” setting, thus based on a wider foundation of “critical friends” expertise and experience;
- Allow a stronger basis for mutual learning and exchange;
- Enhance reliability of final comments and conclusions by engagement of more “external” experts
- Use the “critical friends’ review” setting within the pilot status of all reflections and learning about future potential of the chosen approach and tools.

The main purpose is to enhance and steer further E³UDRES² alliance and its respective members development, learn from various practices, contribute to shared capacity, but also develop a tool for further use.

4.1. Critical Friend panel composition

An effort was made to find a balance within the critical friends’ panel diverse views, expertise and engagement within the E³UDRES² alliance. In general the panel consist of four people:

- One of the people acting at the E³UDRES² alliance level (Secretary General, Director for Learning, a member of the Strategic Group. ..);
- One E³UDRES² Advisory Board member;
- One person from other E³UDRES² partner piloting the Regional Engagement Assessment, most likely someone involved in the relevant Work Package;
- One representative of a similar European university alliance, preferably with a similar profile like E³UDRES², potentially from the same or nearby country.

No specific roles were defined for critical friends, although a professional background and a scope of knowledge of the E³UDRES² alliance and/or local environment and various regulations, cultural patterns play a role.

This composition of the Critical Friends panel allowed to engage representatives of the non-piloting institutions from Fulda, UCLL, UPT and ViA.

4.2. Critical Friend visit Arrangements

During the first day of the critical friend review visit the critical friend panel discusses the key topics of the self-reflection report with four groups of people:

- 1 University leadership
- 2 University key staff
- 3 Students
- 4 Regional stakeholders

It is expected that interaction with these groups allows thorough, focused discussion and provides additional insight into the self-reflection results. The number of people in each group should be between 3 to 6 to ensure the full participation of each participant

The number of participants for the second day workshop should allow interaction, thus should not exceed 30 people including “observers” from other E³UDRES² partners.

The following table provides a general structure of various sessions within critical friends’ review, distributed across two half-days. The framework counts on starting after noon, keeping the meetings with different groups during the first afternoon. The second day morning is devoted to the common workshop which allows for interaction with more participants including those from the hosting institution.

Table 2. General structure of Critical Friend visits

Day1 afternoon	Session Proposed participants	Key focus, primary issues, notes
Hour 1	University leadership University leaders, senior staff in particular those engaged with regional representation, ecosystem	• Introduction, overview • Role of the university in the region • Institutional strategy and relevant policies • Engagement with regional authorities, businesses, institutions, community • Reflection of regional strategies • Communication, marketing, impact • Possible E³UDRES² added value, benefit
Hour 2	University key staff Academic and non-academic senior staff, those engaged intensively with regional agenda, contact people for regional ecosystem....	• Role of university in the region • Implementation of institutional strategies and policies • Reflection of regional needs and dimension in studies, education, learning activities • Regional aspects in research agenda • Innovation activities, support to regional development • Involvement of students

Day1 afternoon	Session Proposed participants	Key focus, primary issues, notes
		- Interaction with local/regional community - Communication & feedback - Possible E³UDRES² added value, benefit
Hour 3	Students A sample of student representatives, possibly from students' board, across various programmes and study years, maybe ages (LLL) yet not more than about 6 Could be hybrid	- Regional profile of the university and its role within the region, attractiveness - Balance of regional and general aspects in study programmes - Other learning offer, life-long learning - Regional challenges and practical experience - Institutional support to students - Students' voice - Possible E³UDRES² added value, benefit
Hour 4	Regional stakeholders A sample of relevant regional actors and stakeholders, relevant for the university strategy and activities, from regional authorities, development agencies, to businesses, institutions, NGOs, but maybe also secondary schools or community reps Could be hybrid	- Role of the university in the region - University support to regional needs and development strategy - Regional priorities, partnerships - Role in developing talents for the region, learning opportunities and match with the needs - University support to innovation, entrepreneurship, support to businesses, SMEs, public institutions' capacity and development (Perceived) impact of the university within the region - Community-focused activities - Possible E³UDRES² added value, benefit
DAY 2 Morning		
Hour 1 - 2	Summative workshop - Pilot assessment team - Participants from other E³UDRES² partners	- Wrap up of the findings - Any clarifications - Joint discussion on possible conclusions & recommendations for both local university and E³UDRES² alliance

Day1 afternoon	Session Proposed participants	Key focus, primary issues, notes
	Interested local staff (students, stakeholders) Open discussion, yet max participation of ca 30 people to keep interactivity	Reflecting on the process (institutional practice, critical friends), guidelines, benchmark indicators, potential of further use of outcomes
Hour 3 (30 min)	Final words, conclusions Institutional leadership, REA pilot team	Final summary, key issues

4.3. Overview of Critical Friend conclusions

Across all four reviews, a consistent picture emerges of **strongly regionally embedded Universities of Applied Sciences (UASs)** that play a central role in developing skills, innovation, entrepreneurship, and societal impact within their respective regions. At the same time, all institutions face similar challenges related to strategic coordination, evidence-based decision-making, visibility of impact, and maximizing the opportunities offered by the E³UDRES² European University Alliance.

Common strengths of the pilot institutions include:

- Strong Regional Embeddedness

All four institutions were recognized as deeply integrated into their regional ecosystems and regarded as trusted partners by municipalities, businesses, public institutions, NGOs, and communities.

- Applied Sciences as a Driver of Regional Development

A defining characteristic across all institutions is the strong integration of: Applied teaching and learning, practice-oriented research, innovation and knowledge transfer and workforce and skills development. Research activities are not seen as isolated academic exercises but as tools for addressing regional challenges and supporting economic and social development.

- Strong Partnerships and Ecosystem Collaboration

Each institution maintains extensive relationships with SMEs and larger companies, municipalities and regional authorities, public institutions, civil society organizations and community actors

- Focus on Talent Attraction, Retention and Skills

All reviews highlighted the importance of preparing and retaining talent in their regions. Key themes included: Responding to labour market needs, lifelong learning and adult education, future skills development, entrepreneurial competencies and multidisciplinary and practical learning experiences.

- Innovation and Entrepreneurship

All institutions demonstrate strong commitment to innovation ecosystems through: Research-to-innovation pathways, start-up and entrepreneurship support, industry collaboration and student innovation activities.

Common Challenges and Recommendations:

Across all four institutions, reviewers identified five shared priorities for further development:

- Strengthen strategic coordination by better aligning initiatives, improving internal collaboration, and connecting institutional and regional strategies.
- Enhance data-driven decision-making through systematic collection of regional data, impact measurement, and evidence-based planning.
- Increase visibility of impact by showcasing success stories, demonstrating regional value, and promoting the expertise of universities of applied sciences.
- Take a more future-oriented role by anticipating emerging skills needs, shaping regional development agendas, and acting as innovation and foresight partners.
- Address regional diversity effectively through tailored approaches for different sub-regions, stakeholder groups, and local contexts while maintaining a coherent institutional strategy.

Overall, the reviews suggest that these institutions should build on their strong regional foundations by becoming more strategic, evidence-based, visible, and proactive in supporting regional transformation.

5 Evaluation and analyses of Regional engagement assessment of E³UDRES²

To evaluate both the methodology and the implementation of the Regional Engagement Assessment (REA) pilot, the E³UDRES² alliance complemented the institutional self-assessments and Critical Friends Reviews with two structured reflection sessions involving pilot teams and Critical Friends, as well as an online feedback survey targeting all major participant groups. These included representatives of the four pilot institutions, organisational team members, Critical Friends, observers, and other participants involved in the process. The aim was to assess the usability of the methodology, identify areas for improvement, and capture the broader learning effects generated by the pilot phase.

5.1. Overall Assessment of the Process

Feedback across all participant groups was highly positive. The REA based on the UASiMAP was widely perceived as a valuable instrument for institutional reflection, organisational learning and peer exchange. Participants highlighted that the process helped make regional engagement activities more visible, increased understanding of institutional strengths and weaknesses, and stimulated strategic discussions that otherwise might not have taken place.

The combination of self-assessment, stakeholder dialogue and external review was considered particularly effective in generating meaningful insights and promoting learning-oriented reflection.

The feedback survey revealed a high level of acceptance of the methodology among participating institutions. Organisational team members generally agreed that both the internal preparation process and the application of the UASiMAP framework were manageable and understandable. Furthermore, most respondents indicated that they would willingly participate in a similar exercise again and considered the balance between effort and benefit to be appropriate. In addition, it has been agreed that making the process “any lighter” – not using collected data and evidence as a support for formulation of conclusions and reflections, limiting the scope of the people / groups engaged in the self-reflection, shorten the internal discussion – and to large extent skipping the external view – may threaten the value of conclusions for institutional development, strategies and improvements.

From the E³UDRES² alliance perspective, the regional engagement assessment initiative allowed a great opportunity to learn about other partners within the alliance, their capacity, strengths and specific issues. Thus, although the alliance level might not have been that strongly represented – due to still only limited engagement of the entire institutions, overall starting stages of the alliance development – the reports and discussions have allowed a great opportunity to learn about the alliance potential and reflect on possible synergies or mutual support.

5.2. Data collection process

The pilot generated several important insights regarding the use of indicators. While basic institutional data such as student numbers, programme portfolios or regional student participation were generally available, many indicators related to regional engagement proved difficult to operationalise and measure. Institutions frequently reported challenges in identifying data owners, accessing relevant information, and retrieving historical data in a consistent manner. In many cases, engagement-related information existed but was dispersed across organisational units and had not previously been collected with regional engagement assessment in mind.

Another challenge concerned the comparability of indicators. Concepts such as “region”, “regional partner”, “community engagement” or “regional impact” were interpreted differently across institutions and national contexts. This highlighted the need for clearer definitions and shared guidance if future alliance-wide comparisons are intended. The pilot also confirmed that regional engagement is highly context-specific and cannot be adequately captured through quantitative indicators alone. In many cases, qualitative examples, stakeholder feedback and institutional narratives provided richer insights than numerical data by themselves.

5.3. Reflection on indicators

A shared reflection among pilot teams, Critical Friends and institutional representatives was that indicators should be understood as serving two complementary purposes. Some indicators capture institutional commitment to regional engagement, such as strategies, structures, networks and partnerships. Others focus on institutional contributions and outcomes, such as collaborative activities, lifelong learning provision, research cooperation or community engagement. Both perspectives are important, as strong institutional commitment

creates the foundations for regional impact but does not automatically translate into measurable outcomes.

Based on the pilot experience, several recommendations emerged for future REA implementation:

- Maintain a balanced approach that combines quantitative indicators with qualitative narratives, stakeholder perspectives and case examples.
- Develop a limited core set of alliance-wide indicators that can realistically be collected by all institutions while allowing flexibility for institution-specific indicators.
- Improve guidance and definitions related to data collection, particularly regarding regional boundaries, partner classifications and engagement activities.
- Strengthen institutional data management and monitoring systems to facilitate future evidence collection.
- Focus on indicators that provide strategic value and support institutional development rather than increasing the overall number of indicators.
- Treat the indicator framework as an evolving developmental tool that can mature alongside institutions' regional engagement capacities and reporting systems.

Overall, the pilot demonstrated that indicators can play an important role in making regional engagement more visible and supporting institutional reflection. At the same time, the experience confirmed that regional engagement assessment should remain a learning-oriented process in which indicators are complemented by qualitative evidence, stakeholder dialogue and peer review. The greatest value emerged not from measurement alone, but from the discussions and reflections that the indicators helped to stimulate.

5.4. Learning Effects and Added value

One of the strongest findings emerging from both the survey and the reflection sessions was the significant learning effect generated by the process. Institutions reported that the REA enabled a deeper understanding of their own regional engagement profile and often revealed activities that had previously remained undocumented, fragmented or insufficiently visible. The process encouraged institutions to take a more holistic perspective on regional engagement and provided opportunities to identify cross-departmental connections and synergies. Participants repeatedly emphasised the value of peer learning within the alliance. Regular exchanges among pilot institutions helped create a shared understanding of regional engagement while allowing different institutional approaches and regional contexts to be compared and discussed. This mutual learning process contributed to the development of a common language and reference framework for regional engagement across E³UDRES².

The Critical Friends Reviews were identified as a particularly valuable element of the methodology. Both institutional participants and Critical Friends highlighted the benefits of receiving external perspectives, constructive feedback and strategic challenge. Review discussions were widely perceived as open, supportive and solution-oriented, creating an environment that encouraged honest reflection while maintaining a strong developmental focus. Acting as a Critical Friend for another institution was itself considered an important learning opportunity that improved understanding of the methodology and strengthened preparation for subsequent reviews.

5.5. Challenges identified

Despite the positive overall assessment, several challenges emerged consistently across institutions. The most frequently mentioned challenge concerned data collection and evidence gathering. Institutions reported difficulties in locating relevant information, identifying data owners and retrieving quantitative information aligned with the indicator framework. In many cases, regional engagement data were dispersed across different organisational units and were not systematically collected or centrally managed. As a result, data collection was often described as one of the most resource-intensive aspects of the assessment process.

Participants also highlighted challenges related to methodological complexity. While the UASiMAP framework was generally considered suitable for the assessment of regional engagement, some respondents reported overlaps between questions, difficulties linking indicators to available data, and uncertainty regarding the most appropriate level of detail for reporting. The overall workload was considered substantial, especially given the tight timelines and the broad scope of the assessment.

From the perspective of Critical Friends, several recurring structural issues were observed across institutions. These included unclear or inconsistent definitions of "region", insufficient reflection on the challenges of the respective regions, weak strategic articulation of regional engagement, limited visibility of governance structures and responsibilities, and insufficient focus on outcomes, impact and long-term change. Reviews often documented numerous activities and projects, but less frequently demonstrated how these contributed to broader institutional objectives or regional development outcomes. The recurring question raised by Critical Friends was therefore not only what institutions do, but also what changes result from these activities and how such changes can be evidenced.

6 Recommendations for Future Development

Several recommendations emerged from the evaluation process. Participants called for more systematic approaches to data collection and monitoring, stronger stakeholder involvement throughout the assessment cycle, and clearer guidance regarding methodology, reporting expectations and review procedures. Suggestions also included allocating more time for institutional reflection, simplifying selected elements of the assessment process and placing greater emphasis on strategic reflection alongside quantitative indicators. The evaluation further highlighted the importance of strengthening the connection between assessment findings and institutional development processes. Participants emphasised that the value of the REA will depend on the ability of institutions and the alliance to translate reflection into action, develop improvement pathways and integrate findings into strategic decision-making. Several institutions already indicated plans to use the results for developing engagement monitoring systems, improving stakeholder management and strengthening regional impact assessment approaches.

The next phase will build on the positive experiences by synthesising common insights, refining methodological elements and developing a roadmap for scaling the REA across the alliance.

7 Transferability and Opportunities for Wider Use

The REA pilot with European University partners can serve as a useful example of how the UASiMAP Framework may be applied beyond a single institutional context. It shows that the framework can support not only individual institutional reflection but also structured exchange

between partner institutions that are interested in strengthening their regional engagement through peer learning and enhancement-led feedback.

For this reason, the REA approach could be recommended for other European University Alliances with participating universities of applied sciences. It may also be relevant for universities of applied sciences that are interested in this model and have suitable international partners who can act as peer learners or critical friends. The pilot showed that the framework can be useful when partners want to compare practices, discuss regional engagement more openly, and learn from different institutional and regional contexts.

For the successful transfer of this approach to other alliances or institutional settings, several conditions seem important:

- The participating institutions should be open to peer learning and willing to discuss not only strengths but also challenges and areas for improvement. A certain level of trust between partners is needed, as the process requires openness and honest reflection.
- Ideally, the institutions should be connected by a shared purpose or strategic framework, while still bringing different regional perspectives into the process.
- Sufficient time and commitment from the local teams are important, as the value of the REA lies not only in the final report, but also in the exchange, reflection, and learning process around it.

The transferability of the REA approach is supported by the fact that it can be adapted to different regional realities. Participating institutions do not need to have the same institutional profile, regional definition, or stakeholder ecosystem. On the contrary, differences between institutions can become a valuable source of learning, as they allow partners to see how similar challenges and needs are addressed in different contexts. This makes the framework relevant for institutions that want to better understand their own regional role while also learning from the experiences of others.

A further factor supporting wider use is the possibility to pool resources and expertise. In an alliance or international peer-learning setting, certain elements of the process can be developed jointly, such as introductory workshops, exchanges on the use of the framework, discussions on indicators, examples of formats, or access to critical friends. This can make the process more efficient for participating institutions, as they do not need to prepare all elements independently, and can benefit from the knowledge, experience, and networks already available within the group.

The wider use of REA can also benefit the broader ecosystem around higher education institutions. Regional stakeholders, students, and policymakers are not only indirectly affected by the outcomes of the process but can also contribute valuable perspectives to it. Their involvement can help institutions better understand regional needs, skills demand, stakeholder expectations, and development opportunities. At the same time, the process can create new spaces for dialogue between higher education institutions, their regions, and European-level cooperation structures.

Overall, the REA translates regional and European needs into a framework that enables different groups to participate, learn from each other, and grow together. Its wider use could support universities of applied sciences, alliances, stakeholders, and policymakers in better understanding regional engagement and in strengthening the connection between institutional development, regional ecosystems, and European cooperation.

7.1. Added value of applying REA in a European University Alliance Context

The UASiMap Framework is a methodology already developed and used by universities of applied sciences to assess and enhance their regional impact and engagement. The E³UDRES² REA pilot explored how this methodology could be scaled up to the level of a European University Alliance by bringing together several E³UDRES² partners to jointly test and reflect on the framework.

By applying the framework in an alliance context, the pilot added a European and peer-learning dimension to a methodology that is usually applied in an institutional or regional setting. The process was not limited to each institution assessing its own regional engagement but created structured moments of exchange between partners throughout the different phases of the pilot. This was further supported by the fact that the core teams included people already active in alliance-related activities, bringing additional knowledge, experience, and networks into the process.

A particularly important benefit was the opportunity for benchmarking with alliance partners. This was effective because the partners were connected through the joint vision and mission of the alliance while operating in different regional contexts. The exchange showed that many challenges and needs were comparable across partners, even though they were shaped by different regional realities and addressed through different approaches. This made the benchmarking especially valuable, as it allowed partners not only to compare practices, but also to reflect on why certain approaches work in specific institutional and regional environments.

The open, enhancement-led format of the REA, together with the critical friend approach, created a specific space for deeper reflection between partners throughout the whole process. The joint work on the REA reports helped partners develop a common basis for understanding each other's regional needs, institutional profiles, stakeholder ecosystems, strengths, and development areas. The following site visits then built on this basis by allowing partners to discuss practices openly, reflect on strengths and challenges, and identify possible connections for further exchange. As the same core teams were involved across the process, the learning became cumulative, with each phase and each visit informing the next one.

Another important added value of applying the REA in an alliance context was the possibility to pool resources and expertise. Activities such as introductory workshops, exchanges on the use of the framework, and discussions on indicators could be organised jointly instead of separately by each institution. This made the process more efficient and allowed partners to build on each other's preparation, experiences, and existing knowledge. The alliance context also provided access to a broader and more diverse pool of expertise, critical friends, and regional and European stakeholders, which enriched the assessment process and reduced the need for each institution to develop all elements independently.

Overall, the REA pilot can be seen as a practical example of how regional engagement and European cooperation can be connected in a meaningful way. It supported mutual understanding among alliance partners, created space for open reflection, and helped partners better understand how their regional role contributes to the broader European dimension of the alliance. At the same time, it showed that membership in a European University Alliance can strengthen, and not replace, each institution's regional engagement.

8 Conclusions

The evaluation demonstrates that the REA pilot successfully achieved its primary objective of creating a learning-oriented framework for understanding and strengthening regional engagement. The process generated substantial benefits for both participating institutions and the E³UDRES² alliance by increasing visibility of regional engagement activities, facilitating peer learning and encouraging strategic reflection. Feedback from institutions, Critical Friends and observers consistently indicates that the combination of self-assessment, peer dialogue and external review creates significant added value while fostering trust, openness and institutional learning. At the same time, the pilot highlighted important methodological and organisational development opportunities, particularly in the areas of impact measurement, data collection, stakeholder participation and strategic alignment. Participants strongly recommended extending the REA to all alliance partners and systematically using the lessons learned to refine the methodology, strengthen institutional capacities and further establish E³UDRES² as a community of practice promoting smart and sustainable regional development. The principal lesson emerging from the pilot phase is clear: the next stage should focus on moving from reflection to action, ensuring that the insights generated through the assessment translate into concrete institutional and alliance-level improvements.

The pilot phase of the REA has generated substantial value for the participating institutions and for the E³UDRES² alliance as a whole. Through the structured self-assessment process, intensive peer exchange and the Critical Friends Reviews, the pilot institutions have gained a much deeper understanding of their own regional engagement profiles, strengths and development areas. Importantly, this understanding did not emerge in isolation but was continuously enriched by dialogue with peers facing similar questions in different regional and national contexts.

One of the most significant outcomes of the pilot has been the mutual learning among institutions. By openly discussing interpretations of guiding questions, indicators and evidence, the pilot partners were able to sharpen their own perspectives while at the same time developing a shared language and reference framework for regional engagement. This collective sense-making process helped to clarify concepts, uncover implicit assumptions and highlight diverse yet equally valid approaches to engaging with regional ecosystems. As a result, participating institutions now have a more nuanced and comparable understanding of what regional engagement means in practice across the alliance.

The REA process also strengthened internal reflection within the pilot institutions. It created structured spaces for dialogue between leadership, academic staff, professional services, students and external stakeholders, thereby increasing awareness of existing engagement activities that were previously fragmented or insufficiently visible. In many cases, the assessment process itself already triggered new conversations, internal coordination and strategic considerations, demonstrating that the REA functions not only as an analytical tool but also as a catalyst for institutional learning and development.

From an alliance perspective, the pilot phase has laid a strong foundation for further collective progress. The experiences gained show that a learning-oriented, non-ranking approach fosters trust, openness and willingness to share practices. This has strengthened the alliance's capacity to jointly reflect on its regional mission and to position E³UDRES² as a community of practice committed to smart and sustainable regional development. The insights from the pilot institutions provide concrete reference points and credible examples that can inspire and support other partners in future assessment rounds.

Several important lessons emerged from this pilot phase:

- Regional engagement is highly context-specific and cannot be meaningfully assessed through numbers alone.
- Self--assessment becomes more robust when narratives, quantitative indicators and stakeholder perspectives are combined.
- Regular peer exchange among pilot institutions was essential for developing a shared understanding and avoiding isolated interpretations.
- Critical Friends Reviews added strategic distance, external credibility and valuable challenge to institutional self--perceptions.
- Engagement assessment is resource-intensive but offers significant learning value for institutions and the alliance.

Looking ahead, the next phase will build on these positive experiences by synthesising common insights, refining methodological elements and developing a roadmap for scaling the REA across the alliance. The strong learning effects observed during the pilot phase underline that the Regional Engagement Assessment has already proven its value as a developmental instrument. In the longer term, it offers significant potential to further deepen institutional learning, strengthen alliance coherence and enhance the collective visibility and impact of E³UDRES² in European regions.

Appendix 1: Comparison of Indicator Availability and Feasibility

Overview of Indicators and Pilot Experience

UASiMAP Dimension	Indicator			Pilot Experience	Main Challenges	Recommendation
Regional Strategies	Cross-sector regional collaborations			Generally available through project databases and institutional records	Different definitions of cooperation and partnership structures	Develop common definitions for regional collaborations across the alliance.
Education Lifelong Learning	&	Regional enrolment	student	Usually available through student administration systems	Different definitions of the regional boundary	Standardise regional definitions for reporting purposes.
Education Lifelong Learning	&	Internships within the region		Available in most institutions	Internship data often not linked to regional classifications	Improve tagging of internship locations.
Education Lifelong Learning	&	Graduate employment in the region		Available only partially	Alumni tracking systems differ significantly between countries	Develop minimum standards for graduate tracking.
Education Lifelong Learning	&	Lifelong learning participation		Generally available	Different programme categories and target groups	Agree on common operational definitions.
Education Lifelong Learning	&	Regional partner involvement in teaching		Often available through examples rather than systematic monitoring	Limited central documentation	Establish institution-wide recording systems.
Research Innovation	&	Regional partners	RDI	Available in most institutions	Regional classification of partners not always documented	Introduce partner categorisation in project databases.
Research Innovation	&	Publications and patents with regional partners		Partially available	Difficult to identify regional co-authorships systematically	Improve reporting structures and metadata.
Research Innovation	&	Staff involved in regional activities	RDI	Usually systematically monitored	Difficult to distinguish regional engagement activities from regular work	Develop HR reporting approaches for engagement activities.
Civic Community Engagement	&	Number of community initiatives		Mostly available through institutional records	Activities often dispersed across departments	Create central documentation structures.
Civic Community Engagement	&	Participants in community activities		Frequently incomplete	Attendance data often not collected systematically	Introduce light-touch monitoring mechanisms.

Overall Reflection on Indicator Use

The pilot demonstrated that indicators can make regional engagement more visible and support evidence-informed reflection. However, data collection proved considerably more resource-intensive than originally anticipated. Institutions frequently reported difficulties in accessing data, identifying responsible units and interpreting indicators consistently across different organisational and national contexts. A particularly important insight was that regional engagement assessment requires a balance between quantitative and qualitative evidence. While indicators provide useful information on structures, activities and trends, they often fail to capture the complexity, quality and context-specific nature of regional engagement.

Consequently, the pilot confirmed that indicators should always be interpreted together with institutional narratives, stakeholder perspectives, and Critical Friends Reviews.

The pilot further highlighted the distinction between two complementary categories of indicators:

Indicators of Institutional Commitment

- regional engagement strategies,
- governance structures,
- partnerships,
- dedicated capacities and resources.

Indicators of Institutional Contribution

- educational outcomes,
- research and innovation cooperation,
- community engagement activities,
- regional development outcomes.

The reflection process showed that both categories are necessary. Institutional commitment creates the conditions for regional engagement, while contribution indicators provide evidence of activities and outcomes within the regional ecosystem.

Recommendations for Future REA Cycles

Based on the pilot experience, the participating institutions recommend:

1. Maintaining a mixed-methods approach combining indicators, narratives and stakeholder feedback.
2. Limiting the number of alliance-wide indicators to a manageable core set.
3. Improving guidance, definitions and documentation standards before future data collection rounds.
4. Strengthening institutional data management and monitoring systems for regional engagement.
5. Allowing institutions to complement common indicators with context-specific indicators reflecting their unique regional profiles.
6. Using indicators primarily as tools for institutional learning, continuous improvement and strategic development rather than as benchmarking instrument

Appendix 2: List of Questions for the REA based on the UASiMAP

Dimension I: Regional Strategies

I.1.1. does the UAS mission and strategy/-ies promote regional engagement?

I.1.2 is the regional role and engagement of the UAS embedded through specific responsibilities of senior staff?

I.2.1. are structures in place at the institutional level to plan, coordinate and embed regional engagement?

I.2.2. do regional actors actively participate in committees / networks / structures of the UAS?

I.2.4 do the regional role and dimension influence the commitment of resources, whether human, financial, space, infrastructure?

I.2.5. are systems in place to monitor, report, evaluate and improve progress and achievements in this domain?

I.4.2. is UAS engaged in key regional networks, partnership, structures and bodies?

I.4.3. are systems (in place or under planning) to help the UAS to understand and analyse the regional needs, opportunities and interests to inform its policies?

Dimension II: Education and Lifelong Learning

II.1.1. do study programmes offer address regional needs, interests and opportunities?

II.1.2. are regional stakeholders involved in UAS education and training policy-making?

II.1.3. is the UAS addressing in regional labour market needs and opportunities?

II.1.4. do you know the impact of your study program on the region?

II.2.1. are external actors, including those from region, involved in design of study programmes?

II.3.1. are RDI activities / topics of students defined by regional actors?

II.3.2. do students have access to work-based learning, e.g. experiences of internships, apprenticeships, dual education, simulation etc.?

II.3.8. are regional actors involved in the internal / external QA processes of the UAS study programmes?

II.3.9. does your UAS deliver 'broad entrepreneurial' competences for graduates?

II.4.4. does the UAS lifelong learning offer match regional needs?

Dimension III: User-Inspired Research, Development and Innovation

III.1.1. do regional demands and opportunities (explicitly) influence UAS RDI strategies & policies?

III.1.2. does the regional context / aspect (description of capacities: HR, financial, infrastructure) feature in UAS RDI strategies & policies?

III.2.1. does UAS provide expertise to regional actors?

III.3.1. are UAS facilities / equipment, such as laboratories, libraries, (easily) accessible for regional actors?

III.4.1. do these outputs relate to regional demands or actors?

III.4.2. does UAS have systematic financial support for these RDI outputs?

Dimension IV: Social, Civic and Community Engagement

IV.1.1. are students offered credit-bearing curricular activities to work in partnership with civic / civil society organisations and groups to address regional societal challenges?

IV.1.2 does the UAS offer programmes that respond to societal needs that are specific to the regional context and communities?

IV.1.3. do study programmes include a community-engaged learning component for students?

IV.1.4. does the UAS facilitate the participation of community representatives in the teaching and learning process?

IV.1.7. does the UAS facilitate and support partnerships between students and regional communities?

IV.2.1. does the UAS analyse and assess the social and community specifics of the region and community needs (e.g. inclusion aspects)?

IV.3.1. does the UAS contribute to /mediate debates and initiatives that address the societal needs of the regional communities?

IV.3.2. does the UAS provide its knowledge and capacity to support the regional communities?

IV.3.3. does the UAS offer public access to its space, facilities and services to regional communities?

IV.4.1. are structures developed or in place for planning, oversight and improvement of the UAS social, civic and community engagement?

IV.4.2. does UAS develop mechanisms to engage community partners in the design and implementation of the UAS social, civic and community engagement?

IV.4.3. are systems in place to monitor, evaluate and improve social, civic and community engagement?

Appendix 3: REA Blueprint

