

An enlarged consortium with a commitment to a sustainable long-term alliance amid the outcomes of the latest EELISA Governing Board meeting.



From left to right: Kathrin Möslein (FAU), Emília Csiszár Koczkané (BME), İsmail Koyuncu (ITU), Christian Lermiaux (PSL), Sabina Nuti (SSSA), Mihnea Costoiu (UPB), Anthony Briant (ENPC), Fabio Beltram (SNS) and Guillermo Cisneros (UPM).

- The EELISA Governing Board met in Paris (14-25 November 2022) at Université Paris Sciences et Lettres and École des Ponts ParisTech.
- This meeting has consolidated the strategy followed by the European Engineering Learning Innovation and Science Alliance (EELISA) for the next period of Erasmus+ funding (2023-27).

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There are moments in the life of every institution that mark a before and an after. For EELISA, after the first meetings that paved the way to its foundation, the gathering that has taken place in Paris on the 14-15 November is one of them.

This was expressed by most attendees of this important meeting that has meant the final commitment and consolidation of cooperation between universities willing to promote change in European higher education.

This meeting was attended by **Anthony Briant**, Director of l'École des Ponts ParisTech; **Alain Fuchs**, President of Université Paris Sciences et Lettres; **Sabina Nuti**, Rector of Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna; **Christian Lermينياux**, Director of Chimie ParisTech; **Fabio Beltram** in representation of Luigi Ambrosio, Director of the Scuola Normale Superiore; **İsmail Koyuncu**, Rector of İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi; **Guillermo Cisneros**, Rector of Universidad Politécnica de Madrid; **Mihnea Costoiu**, Rector of Universitatea Politehnica din București; **Emília Csiszár Koczkáné**, **Vice-Rector for International Affairs** in the representation of the Rector of Budapest University of Technology and Economics *Tibor Czigány*, and **Kathrin Möslin**, Vice President of Outreach in the representation of Joachim Hornegger, President of Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg.

The gathering also counted on the valuable presence of EELISA Executive Director **Sofia D'Aguiar**, EELISA President **Dale A. Martin**, EELISA Coordinator, **Alberto Garrido**, external collaborators **Wendy Purcell** (Harvard University) and **Jose Carlos Quadrado** (Associate Partner ENAEE), as well as representatives of EELISA faculty & researchers, **Laura Trapiella-Alfonso**, non-academic staff, **Behzat Şentürk** and students **Julie Kleinhans**, **Judith Wahl** and **Bendegúz Papp**.

The meeting was divided into two sessions. The keynote speech for day one was delivered by Alain Fuchs, President of Université PSL, who highlighted the challenges of our time and the importance of equipping young people intellectually for the current and future environments. He also recalled the relevance of the Sorbonne speech of French President Emmanuel Macron in September 2017, calling for the creation of a network of transnational alliances of universities in Europe in a context of increasing global competition (read full speech by Mr. Fuchs [here](#)).

Anthony Briant, recently appointed by the President of the French Republic as the Director of Ecole des Ponts, delivered the keynote speech on day two. He addressed the special role of engineers in leading the transition to a decarbonized and resilient economy and society followed by an essential question: How can higher education institutions train these modern, high-level engineers? He expressed the confidence that EELISA will be at the forefront of this challenging mission (read the full speech by Mr. Briant [here](#)).

This confidence was also conveyed by **Vanessa Debiais-Sainton**, Head of the Unit for Higher Education of the Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG-EAC) of the European Commission. After thanking the Rectors, Directors, and President of the EELISA partners for the invitation and the opportunity to convey the expectations of the Commission for the roll-out phase of European Universities alliances, she highlighted the ideas contained in the acronym of EELISA and their relevance for the challenges Europe will be facing in the future. She also underscored some of the strategic objectives of EELISA, in

particular the democratization of engineering, the alignment with the flagship initiatives of the European Strategy for Universities, and the overall spirit of an alliance that seeks to find sustainable solutions to societal challenges.

The inspirational section of the meeting was wrapped up by a roundtable of short interventions in which all institutions' representatives shared their expectations regarding phase 2 of EELISA. More student and staff mobility, more joint program and degree initiatives, more joint applications to research projects, higher visibility, and the expectation for EELISA to become an agent for change, educating and empowering students to be change-makers were some of the ideas shared by the members.

This roundtable was followed by a presentation by Executive Director, Sofia d'Aguiar on the main achievements of EELISA so far, among others:

- The excellent feedback from the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG-EAC) of the European Commission on the Progress Report delivered in June 2022.
- The winning proposal of a Master programme on **Digital Twins for Complex Infrastructures and Urban Ecosystems** by the EELISA partners UPM, ENPC, BME, UPB and ITÜ, selected under the call “Advanced Digital Skills (DIGITAL-2022-SKILLS-02)” of the Digital Europe Programme.
- The implementation of the EELISA Credentials, with the first 1301 Credentials awarded to the participants in EELISA Communities’ activities during the academic year 2021-22.
- The development of the first 37 EELISA Communities offering activities and presented in the fully operative EELISA Community Platform, as well as the first Joint Call for the EELISA Community activities with 24 funded proposals.

Linked to this presentation, members gave their feedback on potential risks, mitigation measures as well as follow-up actions. Following this overview section of the program, the decision-making session was initiated. Attendees engaged in fruitful discussions on how to become an alliance beyond the project scope and what shared and sustainable structures should be implemented so that the stakeholders of each one of the member universities benefit equally from the network.

How to ensure both the consolidation of EELISA and the reinforcement of its management for the next funding period were also at the core of these discussions. Thus, EELISA Governing Board members took key decisions regarding the future governance and structure of the Alliance with the confirmation of the Student Council as a key structure in the EELISA Governance for the Phase 2 as one of the main highlights. Pursuing a stronger involvement of student representatives at all levels, elected through democratic and participatory processes, as well as the involvement of more external stakeholders and advisors were also part of the decisions made by the Board.

Strategic goals for an impactful and sustainable Alliance

The EELISA Governing Board has also defined new priorities and goals for Phase 2 aligned with the [call for proposals](#), the [New European Innovation Agenda](#), the creation of a European Education Area, the [European Commission Communication on a European Strategy for Universities](#), and the consultation with European Commission Officers. All agreed that EELISA will need to mobilise all missions of HEIs, looking for excellence in education, research, innovation and service to society, encouraging employability and entrepreneurship. The strengthening of EELISA Communities, emphasis on Lifelong Learning, a sustainability strategy through joint research projects and engagement with external stakeholders, the inclusion of social sciences and humanities and a memorable baseline that sticks in the reviewer's mind have been identified as key elements of the EELISA strategy for Phase 2. To this extent, the Board also outlined a list of specific strategic goals, among them:

- Bridging engineering, basic, and applied sciences to tackle the EU grand challenges, particularly the ecological and digital transition by strengthening the interdisciplinarity content of EELISA programmes and ensuring that all students have access to a wide range of courses, activities, innovative Joint Programmes at Bachelor, Master and Doctoral levels, and mobility options to study in different EU countries.
- Anchoring innovation and entrepreneurship skills in the reality of EELISA's innovation ecosystems and local fabric while attracting mentors from the private sector to inspire vocations and offer work-based training periods for students and lifelong learners.
- Transforming education & training toward research- and challenge-based learning.
- Improving European competitiveness and resilience while being mindful of local and regional challenges and consolidating the Innovation and entrepreneurship dimensions of EELISA

The enlargement of EELISA and the aim to reach a full geographical balance.

One of the unanimous decisions of this Governing Board meeting has been the importance of extending the alliance to new members. All the participants agreed that including new members will increase EELISA's impact and capacity within and outside Europe.

Thus, the EELISA Governing Board has agreed to integrate a non-EU partner: The [Zurich University of Applied Sciences / Zürcher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften \(ZHAW\)](#). This prestigious university has six focus areas including digital transformation, energy, social integration, sustainability, lifelong learning, and entrepreneurship. The institution will join as a non-funded, non-beneficiary associated partner according to the Grant Agreement of the roll-out proposal, funded by a national-level scheme, and as a full partner according to the Consortium Agreement. In addition, the integration of a Nordic university as a full partner and beneficiary for full geographic coverage of the regions of Europe will also be one of the main goals of EELISA phase 2.

Besides full partners, the board members decided for this enlargement strategy to aim for the inclusion of more relevant associated partners in the alliance. Associated partners can support, advise and contribute to the activities of EELISA. They comprise, for example, other higher education institutions, research institutions, international associations and agencies, incubators and think tanks, and economic entities like corporations and social enterprises.

**** Access the gallery of images of the EELISA Governing Board meeting in Paris [here](#)**

Some links of interest:

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[Members of EELISA](#)

[About EELISA Governance and Structure](#)

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communication@eelisa.eu