



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Progress report on the development of EC2U

NOVEMBER 2021

Lucile BIROT, Communication coordinator of the EC2U Alliance
lucile.berot@univ-poitiers.fr



European Campus
of City-Universities

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Project information

Action Type	ERASMUS+: EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES
Project Title	European Campus of City-Universities
Project Acronym	EC2U
Coordinator	Université de Poitiers (France)
Partners	Universidade de Coimbra (Portugal) Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza Din Iasi (Romania) Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena (Germany) Università degli studi di Pavia (Italy) Universidad de Salamanca (Spain) Turun Yliopisto (Finland)
Reporting Period	From 01/11/2020 to 01/11/2021



European Campus
of City-Universities

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Table of contents

Editorial	3
Introduction.....	5
I. Progress report of EC2U's first year of activities.....	6
A. Implementation of the Alliance.....	6
B. Online and onsite events.....	8
C. Horizon 2020 project : RI4C2.....	14
II. Lines of development for 2022	15
A. Joint Master Programmes : 3 new diplomas to come.....	15
B. Mobility increase : a priority for the Alliance.....	17
C. Digital tools to improve interconnectivity.....	18
D. Virtual Institutes	20
E. Co-financed thesis	21
ANNEX	23

Editorial

On November 1st 2021, the EC2U Alliance celebrated its first anniversary after its official selection in 2020 by the European Commission as one of the 41 pilot Alliances funded under the “European Universities” initiative. But the EC2U ambition started well before, with first discussions on the concept of the European Campus of City-Universities held in November 2017. Actually, the cooperation between EC2U partners is much older, as members of the Coimbra Group network, created in 1985.



This first anniversary coincided with the third EC2U week that took place in Salamanca on the 26th-27th-28th of October 2021: this global Alliance event was the first one to be organised face-to-face, after a year of mainly online activities because of the Covid-19 pandemic and related mobility restrictions.

Despite this difficult context, the EC2U community has demonstrated an exemplary commitment to transform the EC2U ambition into a reality. During the first 12 months, we have seen:

- 6 meetings of the EC2U Councils;
- 12 meetings of the Executive Committee;
- 85 meetings of the Work Packages (WPs) Boards;
- about 300 people (students, administrative staff, teachers, researchers) involved in the EC2U activities;
- about 1250 people (students, administrative staff, teachers, researchers) participating to the three EC2U Forums.

Considering that travelling was almost impossible during the academic year 2020-2021, it is only since September 2021 that our communities could resume mobility. In two months, more than 80 students and 81 staff (all profiles) have already benefited from EC2U mobility opportunities: the expectations are high and so is the EC2U ambition!



European Campus
of City-Universities

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



In September 2021, our Alliance has also launched its “Research & Innovation For Cities and Citizens / RI4C2” H2020 project that will extend the EC2U activities to the research and innovation fields. The aim of the RI4C2 project is to transform the EC2U Alliance into the core driver of a Pan European Knowledge Ecosystem, via a series of well-thought activities with relevant local stakeholders.

In this first EC2U progress report, you will find an overview of the current state of the EC2U Alliance and the major achievements of the first year of activity, incl. governance, events, first EC2U Virtual Institutes on Good Health and Well-being, Quality Education, Sustainable Cities and Communities.

You will also discover the roadmap for the next year with major deliverables such as the EC2U mobile application, the first EC2U joint PhD theses, the launch of many mobility instruments for students and staff (incl. researchers) and the first three EC2U joint Master Programmes on Good Health and Well-being, Quality Education, Sustainable Cities and Communities.

In other words, you will see that we are at the very beginning of an ambitious and exciting journey, all together: I wish you all a happy EC2U anniversary!

Ludovic Thilly, EC2U General Coordinator



European Campus
of City-Universities

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Introduction

The first EC2U progress report aims at providing an overview of the current state of the EC2U project and the progress made towards its implementation in the period between November 1st 2020 and November 1st 2021. This report offers an assessment of two areas: the progress of the first year of the EC2U Alliance's activities and the lines of development for 2022.

About the EC2U Alliance

EC2U is a multi-cultural and multi-lingual European Universities Alliance formed by the University of Poitiers (as coordinator), the University of Coimbra, the University Alexandru Ioan Cuza of Iasi, the University of Salamanca, the University of Pavia, Friedrich Schiller University of Jena and the University of Turku. Its ambition is to develop an open and innovative space allowing seamless mobility among the universities and cities, thus overcoming clichéd views of regional and national identities. The Alliance is based on a unique cooperation between universities and cities, involving academic communities, municipalities, regional authorities, socio-economic actors and citizens. EC2U will promote and unprecedented challenge-based global initiative that leans on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To guide its activities, the Alliance has identified and selected 3 SDGs among the 17: good health and well-being, quality education, sustainable cities and communities.

I. Progress report of EC2U's first year of activities

A. Implementation of the Alliance

The EC2U Alliance, during the first months of activity, focused on the implementation of the pillars of the Alliance and the launch of its first activities. After being selected by the European Commission at the 2020 call of the pilot phase of “European Universities”, EC2U was officially launched at the end of November 2020, during a week of kick-off meetings between the governance bodies (Executive Committee, Closed council, Plenary Council & Quality Council) and the work packages¹ Boards. This event, organised virtually because of the sanitary situation, allowed the different EC2U stakeholders to make important decisions and discuss strategic and decisive points for the continuity of the project.

Following the activity agenda and respecting deadlines is essential to achieve project objectives. During the first year, the different work package teams transmitted about 70 deliverables² to the European Commission. Many of the first deliverables outlined the project work modalities, such as the definition of the performance indicators, the drafting of the communication plan, the design of policy guidelines, and of course the publication of regular reports.

In terms of stakeholders' mobilisation and outreach, the EC2U Alliance has involved 30 associated partners in its activities to support their development and dissemination, and increase their impact and performance. Each EC2U university has brought 3-5 Associated Partners that correspond to the 4 following profiles:

- Cities
- Local / Regional agencies
- European Student Network (ESN) associations
- Scientific parks or higher education stakeholders

Each associated partner has a seat in the Plenary Council of the EC2U Alliance, one of the consultative governing bodies of the Alliance. During the Alliance's first year of activities, the





¹ EC2U is divided in 8 work packages (WP), defining the strategic axis of the project. Each work package is led by a different university member of the Alliance (see annex 1).

² A deliverable is a physical output related to a specific objective or the project

associated partners have had the opportunity to all gather during the 3 Plenary Councils that were held in November, May and October. Some associated partners went the extra mile, as is the case of our 7 municipalities, who held their own work meetings. These meetings led to the preparation of the 2 following applications to European funding: "Cultural Cities Twinning" (acronym: CultCities) to the "Town Twinning" call and "Entrepreneurship Project for Inclusivity and Cohesion (EPIC)" to the "Network of towns" call.

Different actions were carried out related to the dissemination and exploitation of the EC2U project, according to the EC2U Communication Plan. First of all, a "brand book" was developed, with branding guidelines and a visual identity manual. This guide presents the main features that make up the EC2U identity and was designed to consolidate the EC2U brand. On this model, print tools and promotional materials were conceived.

Concerning external communication: due to the sanitary crisis, emphasis was placed on digital communication. A website (<http://www.ec2u.eu>) was created as a central point of information and updates. It will evolve as the project progresses. In addition, in order to reach the different targeted audience (students, academics, policymakers, cities, citizens, etc.), the presence of EC2U on social media was highly developed: EC2U accounts were created on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn & YouTube. At this date, the Twitter EC2U account is followed by about 800 people, while the monthly tweets impressions reached 46.5K timelines in October 2021.

				
	@ec2u_Alliance	@ec2uAlliance	@ec2u_alliance	@ec2u-alliance
Number of Followers	787	297	314	111
Number of impressions (Oct. 2021)	46 500	20 087	1284	3 776



European Campus
of City-Universities

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



B. Online and onsite events

EC2U Forums

Every six months, the Alliance organises the EC2U Forum to gather students, staff, citizens, local and regional authorities and foster open dialogue on pressing issues in society and share good practices. In 2021, 3 Forums took place:

- **First EC2U Forum, on the 4th-5th of February:** The University of Poitiers organised two webinars with experts of the Sustainable Development Goals and of the European Degree. Due to the sanitary situation, the event was organised fully online. More than 600 people registered to follow the webinars, coming mostly from the countries of the Alliance. The themes of the webinars inspired young people, as 40% of the audience were students.
- **The Second EC2U Forum, was also held virtually on the 19th-21st of May:** The University of Turku organised this three-day event focused on social sustainability, co-operation between universities and cities, micro-credentials, and student engagement. It gathered more than 400 participants and speakers, coming from, not only, all the EC2U Universities but also from municipalities, stakeholders and other international universities.
- **The Third EC2U Forum took place in Salamanca, Spain, on the 27th-28th of October.** The most important feature of this Forum was that it was the first live meeting of the EC2U communities. Nearly 130 members of the EC2U community gathered in Salamanca: the heads of partner universities, researchers, staff, students & associated partners. Moreover, about 100 people registered to follow the Forum online. This forum was full of various activities: 3 public conferences on the EC2U Virtual Institutes, a discussion and workshop on “How to create an EC2U ecosystem?”, a round table with representatives from other Alliances, networks and from the European Commission on “How to assess the impact of European universities?”, etc. Some events were organised by and for the students: sport competitions, an intercultural night, and a debate on the future of higher education.



In total, over 1230 people were registered for the EC2U Forums in 2021. The recordings of these events are available on the Alliance's YouTube channel as well as on the organizing universities' channels, and have recorded approximately 1500 views to date.

Science Battle

A Science Battle is a game life event to promote researchers' culture and science, while showing the public how researchers concretely tackle a new research question. The event was created by the University of Turku in 2016, as part of the European Researchers' Night program, before being integrated into the EC2U initiatives. The global objectives of this joint-campus event were simple: increase cooperation between collaborating universities, promote researchers' culture and science across Europe, and increase the visibility of the EC2U alliance among students, staff, and citizens alike.

The first round took place on the 24th of September 2021, on the European Researchers' Night, between three universities of the alliance: the University of Pavia (Italy), the University of Poitiers (France), and the University of Turku (Finland). The competing partners were selected via a lottery held during the EC2U Forum in Turku, in May 2021. The winner of this edition was the team from the University of Pavia. In 2022, the Science Battle will be organised by the Universities of Coimbra (Portugal), Iasi (Romania), Jena (Germany) and Salamanca (Spain). In 2023, the third round will see the winners of the two previous years compete.

Three competing teams

Each university was represented by a team of six multidisciplinary researchers. The teams were composed of people in different career stages (e.g. professor, university lecturer/teacher, PhD student etc.), from different faculties, different genders and ages. The diversity of each team was important, to increase cross-faculty collaboration and European cooperation.

Collaborating to tackle societal questions

The aim of the Science Battle is to show how researchers collaborate. Each team was placed in a closed environment, for three hours, and were given a certain number of questions to tackle. The questions asked were gathered beforehand in each university and corresponding city, via local newspaper ads, radio appearances, social media, and high schools.

Competing in a fun environment

The competing teams had up to fifteen minutes to answer a given question, depending on the scope of the question. Questions represented a wide range of disciplines and teams were able to challenge and solve them in a playful manner. A panel of four judges selected from non-competing partners gave scores to each team per question, according to the answer but more importantly on how the team presented their explanation.



At this date, over 400 people watched the Science battle online (via the Zoom link or watching the YouTube replay) and 72 people followed the event onsite.

Summer School

Between the 20th and 26th of September 2021, the WP4 team organized the first EC2U Summer School, hosted by Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași. This summer school, entitled *Smart Ageing and Healthy Life*, was the **first event of this kind, that allowed mobility within the EC2U Alliance**. An innovative theme: smart ageing from a lifelong perspective – gathered 31 students (selected from more than 150 applicants) from partner universities of Coimbra, Iași, Jena, Pavia, Poitiers, and Salamanca. Throughout the week, they participated in a variety of courses and practical activities coordinated by teachers from the Virtual institute GLAGE and The Faculty of Physical Education and Sports (University of Iasi), in collaboration with professionals from partner universities. Proposed activity topics: Smart Ageing, Promoting Physical Activity with Wearables, Respiratory management, Activity Care Plans for Seniors, Dynamic activities with integrative-recreational purposes, First aid, etc.



This summer school purpose was to form a community of future specialists in the field of healthy living and smart ageing, by the objectives as:

- Learning to provide comfort and companionship to senior citizens;
- Learn how to work with respect and dignity regardless the vulnerabilities of ageing;
- Developing the abilities of a caregiver able to help patients in daily routines;
- Developing competencies for active life & smart ageing .

The 31 participants gave very positive feedback. Students gave testimonies about their experience, in which they highlighted the impact the summer school had on their professional and



European Campus
of City-Universities

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



personal development. They also recommended other students attend a summer school and stated that they were interested in participating in future editions of the EC2U Summer School, that will be organized by other EC2U member universities.

Other events and actions

EC2U Think Tank #Value4YourValues | April 2021 – A survey on personal, professional and societal level values, as well as perceived obstacles and solutions for actively living these values was sent to people from all alliance universities and cities. The survey was open from April 6th to April 30th, 2021. 1389 respondents completed the survey.

At the Second EC2U Forum, hosted online by the University of Turku, this Think Tank survey findings provided the basis for conversation in the session “Building a value-based community”. Representatives of EC2U stakeholder groups (students, faculty, city administrators and business) and locations were part of this discussion.

The survey results highlighted several important reflections that are to be integrated EC2U actions.

1. Individuals in the seven countries do share values.
2. Two recurring themes emerged from the survey 1) respecting each other and 2) environmental protection – these should be focal points for future EC2U actions.
3. Differences must also be respected. We need to create activities and communication messages with a common value basis. However, differences in value perception exist between age and gender groups. We need to act for both present and future generations of students and citizens, hence activities and communication need to be adjusted accordingly.
4. Networks need to be built. The connections between academia, citizens, municipalities and companies should be strengthened systematically.
5. Finally, we should continue the European dialogue together.

In the Salamanca City Hall, in the session “How to build an EC2U-Ecosystem” held during Third EC2U Forum (September 28th 2021), Dana Strauß, EC2U WP7 Co-Leader, presented these findings to an assembled group of EC2U students, staff and stakeholders. She and the EC2U Coordinator, Ludovic Thilly, led the group during a lively brainstorming session where all ideas will contribute to the creation of a long-term valued-based community.



European Campus
of City-Universities

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



EC2U Lighthouses of Education | since April 2021 – A network of institutes, departments and programs dedicated to innovation in learning and/or teaching spanning all seven EC2U-Partner universities was established. This network has met regularly since April 2021. About 40 representatives from 13 programs have participated and additional programs will be invited to join the upcoming network meetings.

The goal is to encourage the sharing of best practices, increase the visibility of these programs in the wider European public, and provide a basis for long-term collaborations in the field of education.

Shared projects are in the making. Working groups in three areas have been formed within the network: training (future) school teachers, faculty, and students in transversal skills.

GLADE Counselling lab for students of all ages | April 26th 2021 - A peer training with, and for, staff entitled *The online GLADE Counseling lab for students of all ages* took place online on April 26th, 2021. The purpose was to stimulate the exchange of good practice around counseling services which are provided to EC2U academic community students by specialists from the 7 member universities of the alliance. The activity contributed to 1. training staff involved in the counseling activity, 2. the development of the collaborative relations between them and 3. represented a first step in the establishment of *The online GLADE counseling lab for students of all ages* that will work within the *EC2U Virtual Institute for Good Health and Well-being*³. 11 members of the EC2U academic community, teachers and administrative staff, representatives of the 7 EC2U universities, gave presentations during the training session. The activity was addressed to the academic and administrative staff and members of the EC2U project. The total number of participants was 27.

EC2U Entrepreneurial Academy | Oct./Nov 2021 – This program is destined to students of all disciplines. It aims to inspire students and young researchers to consider self-employment and provide them with key knowledge to get started.

The academy was launched with the call for participation in the first online-learning-offer for students of all seven universities: On November 1st 2021, six EC2U students were able to participate in a Learning Camp “Entrepreneurship for research professionals” hosted by Prof. Jarna Heinonen at the University of Turku.

³ More info on the Virtual institutes page 17



European Campus
of City-Universities

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



The initial phase of online courses provided by faculties and staff of all partner universities, is to be followed by an on-site event, the Entrepreneurial Week. This first iteration of the Academy will culminate in the Entrepreneurial Week held during the next EC2U Forum in Pavia (5th and 7th April 2022). Organized by Pavia's Prof. Stefano Denicolai, universities, cities and business representatives from all seven EC2U partners are invited to contribute to the program. The second and third EC2U Entrepreneurial Academies will be held in Iasi and Jena, respectively.

C. Horizon 2020 project: RI4C2

The "Research & Innovation For Cities & Citizens – RI4C2" project, submitted by the EC2U Alliance, has been awarded a 2 million euros grant in the Horizon 2020 "Science with & for Society" (SwafS) call for European Universities. The RI4C2 project is rooted in several important recent initiatives supported or developed by the European Commission in the areas of the Knowledge square, composed of Education, Research, Innovation and Service to society. These components are also the core missions shared by the participating universities. In this project, the seven partners have the joint overall objective to create a shared Pan-European Knowledge Ecosystem (PEKE). The project will develop a process that involves a gradual and adaptative transformation of all aspects of the Research & Innovation (R&I) missions at the participant universities. Globally, the RI4C2 project activities and deliverables will feed the "consolidation phase" of the EC2U Alliance. The project is based on eight work packages that act as "mini-engines" producing all components of the future PEKE and strengthening the local Knowledge ecosystems led by the participating universities. Each partner leads one work package (except WP1 and WP8 led by the alliance coordinator, the University of Poitiers).

First activities of RI4C2 project:

- RI4C2 project was launched virtually on the 8th of October 2021.
- The first episode of the RI4C2 "**Research and Innovation for Cities and Citizens**" lecture series was held in Jena with the participation of Prof. Dr. Uwe Cantner, in September.
- Representatives from EC2U Alliance participated in the **Workshop Gender Equality Plans** co-organized with Ecorys group (contracted by European Commission) and CHARMEU Alliance on 12th November 2021.

- Ludovic Thilly (EC2U General Coordinator) and Olga Wessels (ECIU Alliance) co-organised a **Workshop** gathering the 41 coordinators of the European Alliances with the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research, Frédérique Vidal on the 15th November in Paris.

II. Lines of development for 2022

A. Joint Master Programmes: 3 new joint degrees to come

The three EC2U Master Programme are based on three selected United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs): Good Health and Well-Being, Quality Education, and Sustainable Cities and Communities. They reinforce the level of systemic integration between the seven universities and commit the Alliance into the creation of European diplomas.



These three joint master degrees are innovative in the way that they offer a variety of courses with UNSDG-related interdisciplinary subjects, different types of mobilities (physical and virtual mobilities), and different degrees of freedom to personalise the curricula. The master-programmes gather different fields of study from each partner institution.

- Master Programme “LIFELINE – Lifelong Well-Being and Healthy Ageing” is based on the UNSDGs n°3 (*Good Health and Well-Being*) and is coordinated by the University of Alexandru Ioan Cuza of Iasi. This diploma concerns new jobs related to health and well-being, such as community care worker, consultant social worker, specialists in social work and counselling, etc...

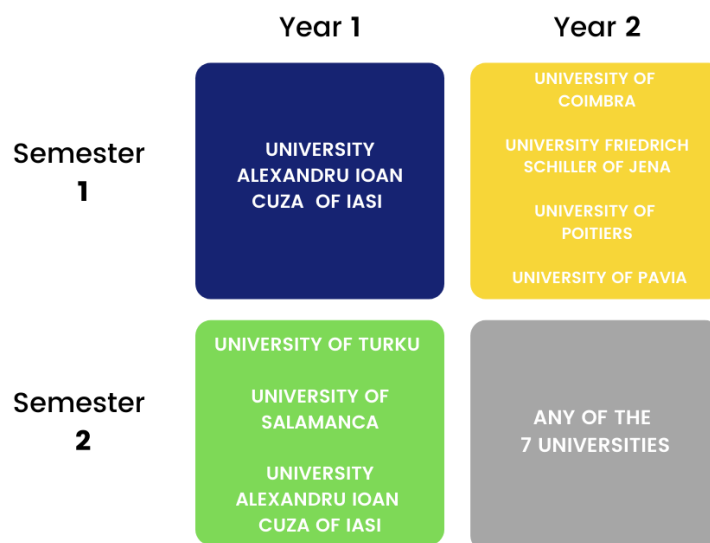
- Master Programme “European Languages, Cultures and Societies in Contact” is based on the UNSDGs n°4 (*Quality Education*) and is coordinated by the University of Salamanca. This programme contributes to training new professionals, taking into consideration the linguistic and cultural diversity at the European level. The jobs targeted are teacher-researchers, bilingual communication officers, journalists, project officers, mobility consultants, cultural mediators, etc...

- Master Programme “Sustainable Cities and Communities” is based on the UNSDGs n°11 (*Sustainable Cities and Communities*) and is coordinated by the University of Coimbra. This master contributes to training future professionals in management and consulting; domains of environment, energy and urban planning in a national and international context. The jobs concerned are: eco-consultant, manager in sustainable development, teacher-researcher, etc...

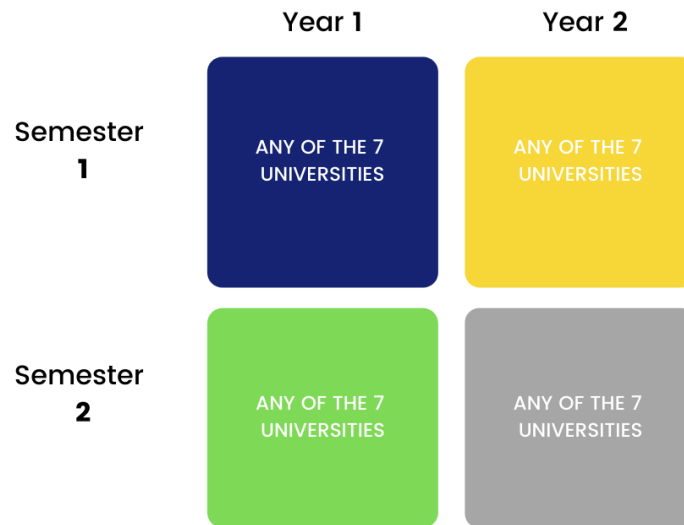
Opening - In order to open these programmes for the academic year 2022/2023, each University had to follow their national accreditation procedure. Some universities have already received positive feedback from their accreditation agency.

Mobility scheme - Each Master Programme is different in its mobility scheme. The Master Programmes will boost the mobility rate with classical ERASMUS+ mobilities; as it is one of the stated goals of the EC2U Alliance.

In the Master Programme “LIFELINE”, the seven universities are involved and proposed the following mobility scheme:

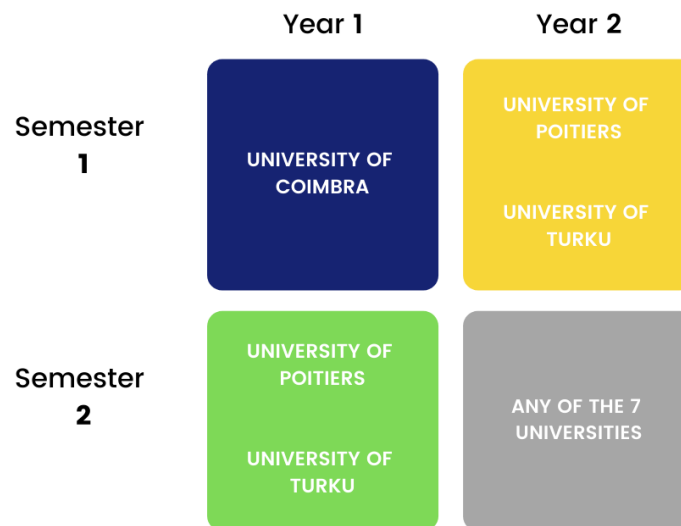


In the Master Programme “European Languages, Cultures and Societies”, the seven universities are also involved and proposed the following mobility scheme:



In the Master Programme “Sustainable Cities and Communities”, only three Universities are involved at the moment: The University of Poitiers, Coimbra and Turku. The four other Universities will participate in the form of workshops or seminars, and host of research internships.

The mobility scheme is the following:



B. Mobility increase: a priority for the Alliance

One of the main objectives of the EC2U Alliance is to drastically increase the mobility of students, Academic and non-academic staff, with targets of respectively +10% and +5% each year.



European Campus
of City-Universities

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



In addition to the students performing classical long-term semester mobility within the Alliance, many activities of the 8 Work Packages (WP) provide short term mobility opportunities for EC2U students and staff (in Virtual, physical or blended mode).

To this end, 40% of the grant received is aimed at financing short-term mobility.

Here are a few examples of project activities that include short term mobility:

- The governance meetings (WP1)
- The students' events (WP2)
- Staff training for the EC2U tools (WP2, WP3)
- The Summer Schools (WP4)
- The Virtual institutes (PhD Programmes, conferences, Research projects application, etc.) (WP4,5,6)
- The Entrepreneurial Academy (WP7)
- The Think Tanks (WP7)
- The EC2U Forums (WP8)

C. Digital tools to improve interconnectivity

“My Mobile Tutor” application

“My Mobile Tutor” is a mobile application for students, in particular, who are either planning or starting their studies in a new city. It is most useful for students going abroad yet domestic students will also benefit from it. “My Mobile Tutor” will provide important information about the university, city, daily life and free time activities to help student to feel at home. It will also provide information about local events and services on a map.

Each EC2U partner university will have their own customised version, with both English and the local language. All versions can be accessed using one app. Students can, for example, get to know about all seven universities and cities and choose where they would like to study. When they arrive to the new city, this mobile guide will help them becoming part of the new community.

The first version of the application was released and discussed during the EC2U Forum in Salamanca (November 2021). The release of the “My Mobile Tutor” app will be in the early April 2022.

Connect Centre

The Connect Centre aims at providing new shared digital tools to increase the level of interconnectivity within the Alliance. The creation of this Connect Centre will be happening in two steps: the construction of an Interchange Platform allowing an exchange of data; and the construction of the Knowledge Hub, responding to the need of exchanging knowledge rapidly and efficiently, sharing experience and best practice and achieving closer levels of integration and innovation within the Alliance.

During the first year of activities of the EC2U Alliance, three main axes of the Connect Centre were already developed:

- Wiki platform, a space to exchange and disseminate information between all EC2U members to harmonize the mobility protocol. Currently, both Mobility handbook and courses catalogue are online. Next year, the content of the platform will be enriched with new tabs (governance, didactics, knowledge, infrastructure) and a public access will be available on some contents.
- The Interchange Platform, an infrastructure to exchange students' data on mobility, using Erasmus Without Paper as a support. On this Interchange Platform, all information about student will be shared with the universities he or she studied in, in order to give the same level of information to each university.
- EC2U Student Card, build on the model of the European Student Card standard and adding some more data to it. This EC2U Student Card is still on test and will be more developed next year.

In 2022, the priority of the connect centre will be the development of EC2U Student Card. Students in mobility will then be able to have a mobile virtual card displaying their institution, diploma, email and all sort of information to validate their student's status. It is also planned to test NFC capabilities on Apple and Android Smartphones to allow this card to interface with physical devices in EC2U Universities such as Canteen, Libraries, etc. Another priority of the connect centre is the Knowledge Hub. Thanks to this global hub, one will be able to access all kind of information from all EC2U partners (events, courses, laboratories, research activities...) This Knowledge Hub will be launched during the year 2022 and will be at its fullest by 2023.



European Campus
of City-Universities

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



D. Virtual Institutes

The Virtual Institutes (VIs) are joint Institutes “without physical walls” hosting international inter-disciplinary teams of students, teachers, researchers and innovators from the seven universities composing the EC2U Alliance. This concept aims at fostering the rapid integration of research results and/or innovation into education via the new challenge-based curricula and a diversity of short-term trainings, such as internships, summer/winter schools, workshops, etc. These knowledge-creating teams will deliver innovative solutions to local, national, European and global challenges. In the first phase of the EC2U project, the “good health and well-being”, “quality education” and “sustainable cities and communities” UNSDGs have been selected in view of their particular relevance with respect to the EC2U Alliance Mission Statement. These VIs are prototypes of a “mission-oriented approach”, which will be soon promoted by the Horizon Europe ninth Framework Programme: pillar 2 “global challenges” (e.g. clusters on “health”, “inclusive and secure society”, etc.). This way, the EC2U project will prepare its teams to respond to this new way of performing research, linking it to education and innovation.

VIs will also foster a completely new way of approaching and solving a given challenge, in a community that is still dominated by disciplinary habits and where education, research and innovation too often appear as isolated silos. Building upon, but extending the concept of “Living Labs”, the VIs will significantly modify the landscape of the seven universities. They will guide the creation of teams involving students, teachers, researchers and innovators from all partner universities and will foster the inter-disciplinary profile of these teams, mixing actors from Sciences, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM), Natural Sciences (NS), Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

Focus on: the EC2U Virtual Institute for Quality Education (VIQE)

The VIQE is the EC2U virtual institute which combines education, research and innovation for advanced studies on quality education. Within the three-year framework of the EC2U project only a pilot project profile of this Virtual Institute will be developed and fully implemented: Language, Cultural and Societal Diversity in Europe.

VIQE will implement the following activities in the next 12 months:

Language Policy Research Project: Language Policy and Multilingualism in European Universities



European Campus
of City-Universities

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Building on previous research on language policy, the EC2U VIQE Language Policy Research Project will study the current language policies at both universities taking part in European Alliances and at universities which are not engaged in official alliances as described in the European Alliances Initiatives. The research team adopts thus a comparative approach to study language policy practices. The research design is both qualitative and quantitative and incorporate research methods from the Humanities and Social Sciences, including Digital Humanities.

Research Seed Mobility Programme on Language and Cultural Diversity

VIQE will be implementing in the next months a Research Seed Mobility Programme on Language and Cultural Diversity for researchers. The main objective of this mobility programme is to actively promote in-depth research collaboration among researchers and research groups of the seven EC2U universities. Already existing local research groups working on languages, cultures and societies in contact will work together, form EC2U research clusters, develop research seed projects and then apply for additional national and EU funding.

Design and implementation of joint PhD training activities for the existing PhD programmes on European languages and cultures

Two VIQE training activities will be designed and implemented in 2022:

- An EC2U Workshops for future university staff (“New multilingual learning and teaching spaces for European Campuses”), to be held in May at the University of Iasi UAIC
- An EC2U PhD intensive course for PhD students (“Machine Learning techniques and text processing tools applied to the study of linguistic diversity and cultural perception”), to be held at the University of Poitiers.

E. Co-financed PhD theses

One of the objectives of the EC2U Alliance is to produce multidisciplinary synergies between education, research and innovation. In order to start the activities of the three Joint Virtual Institutes, some universities of the EC2U Alliance have decided to co-finance joint PhD theses. This initiative will be accompanied as well, with the additional support from the “RI4C2” H2020 sister project.



European Campus
of City-Universities

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Concrete examples:

The University of Poitiers is financially supported by the French Government in its coordination role within the EC2U Alliance. Thanks to this financial support, the University of Poitiers has decided to co-finance 6 joint PhD theses, related to the three Virtual Institutes. The PhD student will be supervised by a duo of supervisors; one from Poitiers and the other one from one of the EC2U partner universities. Therefore, the student will have the opportunity to study half time in Poitiers and half time at the partner university. The selection of the candidates is under progress. The partner universities involved in this initiative have been identified: The University of Salamanca, Pavia, Turku and Coimbra. The theses will start early 2022.

The University of Jena will also co-finance 3 joint PhD theses from its own budget, one per Virtual Institute. The implementation of the theses is still under discussion.



European Campus
of City-Universities

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



ANNEX

Annex 1 – EC2U project structure or “EC2U Temple”

