

Evaluation report

Una.Resin project, WP1

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Pilot 1: Developing a format for supporting systematic collaboration on the Una Europa priority global challenges

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1 Executive summary

Una.Resin WP1 was tasked to pilot methods to accelerate cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration and networking in addressing the priority challenges. The first of the two WP1 pilots described in this document aimed to **developing a format for supporting systematic collaboration on the Una Europa priority global challenges**. Under this pilot we had two separate actions: 1) Una Europa R&I strategy workshop and 2) Piloting a process Horizon Europe Pillar II Call matchmaking.

The approach was aligning broadly with the Una.Resin project objectives to create a common and nearly barrier-free research and innovation eco-system for our researchers and partners and to strive to make our research even more interdisciplinary and international. Thus, the pilot linked to all seven transformation modules developed under this H2020-SwafS. However, the most directly addressed transformation modules were: (1) develop a common research and innovation agenda and (7) explore joint university structures.

Una Europa R&I strategy workshop

The aim of this pilot activity was to develop an on-line format for strategic futures discussions to identify emerging research areas in interdisciplinary collaborative setting. The research community is very insightful about the future developments, but due to the slow self-correcting nature of research, the researchers are sometimes hesitant to co-create and express their insights prior to pre-reviewed processes. With this pilot, we aimed to find a way to encourage the academics to discuss their insights and find new collaborations beyond their research fields. To lead the participants to the grand challenges approach and EU's "Approach to International R&I Collaboration in a Changing World", we provided two keynote speeches: Aleksi Neuvonen, Demos Helsinki and Nienke Buisman, Head of Unit, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Global Approach & International Partnerships, International Cooperation. The workshop was co-designed and co-facilitated by the think tank Demos Helsinki.



The feedback from attendees of the was generally very positive and enthusiastic. Many participants found that they lacked skills and traditions for this kind of multi-/interdisciplinary workshop approach and wished for better introduction to this kind of working method. There is plenty of potential to use this workshop format when developing the Una Europa focus areas into interdisciplinary hubs and as part of the community engagement in general Una Europa strategic work. However, there is not yet ownership for organising and facilitation of the co-creative futures workshops in our alliance.

Piloting a process Horizon Europe Pillar II Call matchmaking

The aim of this pilot activity was to develop a process for interdisciplinary matchmaking for Horizon Europe Pillar II calls. According to the Una.Resin WP1 benchmarking phase, there is a major interest and unused potential in our alliance regarding European funding, particularly Horizon Europe Pillar II funding. There are existing support service structures at most partner universities, thus there is potential to build systematic and sustainable support for the calls also on Una Europa level and to share each other's best practices. In this pilot process we identified the enabling and hindering structures, processes, and cultures at the partner universities and at the alliance level. We also shared best practises and tools to create an ideal process.

The pilot action was designed and facilitated in close collaboration with the Una Europa Research Coordination Cluster, the Self-steering committee of the One Health focus area as well as the Una Europa Vzw external funding manager. We also had an honour to have an EC keynote speaker at the first of our two workshop, Research Policy Officer Jean-Charles Cavitte. He familiarized the participants with EC policy and EU funded research linked to One Health.

The feedback from participants was positive and stated that with the lessons learned we can refine this approach to have a winning recipe for funding. The tight schedule and the process to identify the proposal coordinators turned out to be the most problematic parts of our pilot process. In the horizon Pillar II matchmaking process the alliance should support 1) Identification of the topics and coordinators (starting point) 2) Collection of the EoIs 3) Matchmaking workshops 3) General info-session about the funding instrument. The proposal writing support, including grant writer resources and potential travel funds, on the other hand should be provided by the coordinating university. We also learned that there is a need for online platform allowing interactive collection of expressions of interest.

General outcomes and lessons learned

The most important outcome of the pilot was the processes self and that they are now ready for future use. The pilot allowed us to develop and test the processes step by step and to identify needed tools, skills and human resources needed to carry out such creative collaborative interdisciplinary pathway.

Organising this kind of workshops or matchmakings takes a lot of time and asks for understanding of context and networks. The process and the tools are not enough, but skilled facilitators and systematic communication is a key for success. The universities should consider designing and facilitation of the collaborative workshops, both on-line and on-site, as a special skill of the research professionals. There could be specific training for it. To accelerate the interdisciplinary research collaboration, Una Europa must pay more attention to matching SSH+STEM and fields and foster the cross-focus area collaboration.



2 Overview of the evaluation

2.1 Objectives and aims of the pilot

- *Outline the specific EC Transformation Module(s) that the pilot aimed to address.*
- *What barriers to cross border and cross-sectoral research and innovation collaboration did the project address?*
- *To what extent has the pilot project addressed the EC TM(s) towards the desired institutional change?*
- *Indicate any lessons that were explored or drawn from other Una.Resin or related projects in the implementation of this pilot?*

The pilot addressed capacity building for collaborative research to solve grand challenges. The approach was comprehensive and thus linked to all seven transformation modules developed under this H2020-SwafS in some extent. However, the most directly addressed transformation modules were: (1) develop a common research and innovation agenda and (7) explore joint university structures.

With the two actions in this pilot, we wanted to learn about the barriers and enablers in the following areas:

- Building the Una Europa Network for collaborative research
 - The areas targeted in particular: international research collaboration, research infrastructures, ecosystems with non-academic actors and research lifecycle (e.g. sharing, management, support, training personnel, opening collaboration to non-academic organizational partners and citizens)
- Working cultures
 - Inter-, Trans-, Crossdisciplinarity and challenge-based approach in research collaboration
 - Workshop-type of co-creation in the research context
 - Foresight and futures literacy and understanding of the grand challenges in the context of excellence and impact, the key goals of the Una Europa partner universities.
- Institutional processes
 - General institutional enablers and barriers for international research collaboration
 - Support for research funding: alignment of the structures and priorities of the partner universities
- Incentives and practises for the researchers to build a successful Horizon Europa Pillar II proposal

In the planning and appointing the participants and speakers, we wanted to highlight the following aspects in particular:

- Equality both from the gender and career stage perspective
- Emphasizing the save space for new ideas
- The EC context both to the grand challenges and research funding instruments

When setting the objectives, we considered the institutional change in particular in relation to following EC Transformation modules: 1) Develop activities to anticipate the potential social, environmental, and economic impacts of research (e.g. risk assessment, TA, foresight, Impact assessment, gender analysis;



2) Help develop R&I standards that enhance social responsibility, inclusiveness, sustainability of R&I processes and products; 3) Develop material for integration of science and society in curricula (e.g. covering STEM, public engagement, ethics, gender); 4) Enlarge the scope of R&I activities by fostering informal science education (museums, science centres), promoting citizen science, engaging civil society actors and citizens.

The project aimed to target primarily: 1) The project itself (advising the R&I strategy development, delivering the tasked pilot); 2) Research performing organisation; 3) Researchers 4) Businesses and Industry R&D, Citizens and NGOs, Public authorities; 5) Beneficiaries: Una Europa organisations, Researchers participating

Simultaneously to this pilot, University of Helsinki was developing a roadmap to implement the university's strategy especially in the strategic aim of interdisciplinary research. The process was conducted in an innovative way using the methods of co-creation. The process provided many useful pedagogical learnings for our pilot about how to engage the participants to the workshop and to the mindset of co-learning during the process and the workshop.

2.2 Initial design and implementation of the pilot project

- *Describe the design of the pilot project considering alignments with the overall Una.Resin project objectives (internal) and other Una Europa and/or European University Alliance interventions (external).*
- *Describe the various sources of data collected and the analysis undertaken. Take into consideration the framework used for gathering and including feedback from your stakeholders.*
- *Considering the design and implementation phases, describe the roles of the Clusters and/or Self-Steering Committees in the delivery of the pilot?*
- *What challenges were faced during the design and implementation phases of this project and how they were overcome or how you intend to tackle?*

Una.Resin WP1 was tasked to pilot methods to accelerate cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration in addressing the priority challenges in two pilots. Under this pilot we had two separate actions: 1) Una Europa R&I strategy workshop and 2) Piloting a process Horizon Europe Pillar II Call matchmaking.

Una Europa R&I strategy workshop

The pilot “Developing a format for supporting systematic collaboration on the Una Europa priority global challenges” was originally scheduled to the second half of the project. The covid-19 pandemic forced us to work on-line and to design format for on-line workshop. At the same time, the pandemic complicated not only implementation of the pilots, but also the preparation of the flagship of the project, the Una Europa R&I strategy. We decided to take an advantage of this workshop to collect pivotal insights also for the Una Europa R&I strategy development. By this we aimed to ensure that we identify the true needs of researchers and the barriers that they perceive as potentially hindering Una Europa R&I collaboration, as well as the challenges of building a larger ecosystem. These perspectives led us to design a three-hour on-line workshop, which was preceded by a pre-assignment.

During the planning phase, we had continuous discussions with Una Europa Vzw and with the team preparing the Una Europa 2030 strategy. The process and the relevant working questions were designed together with other Una.Resin WPs and the Research coordination cluster members. The Una.Resin project managers at each partner university also helped us to identify and invite participants for the workshop. The Una.Resin WP2 colleagues helped us to articulate relevant questions around Research



infrastructures and made sure that the workshop outcomes also serve their work towards the Una Europa RIR strategy. To support us with designing and facilitation of the R&I strategy workshop we recruited Demos Helsinki Think Thank. We wanted to learn from their long experience of organising co-creative futures workshops. The discussion groups were facilitated by colleagues from Una Europa Research Coordination Cluster and other Una.Resin work packages.

With the **pre assignment** we wanted to tune the minds of the participants to think about 1) future visions 2) emerging research themes. The pre assignment also helped us to prepare the workshop discussion questions. As most of the participants were not familiar with Una Europa, we provided materials about the current excellence and priority areas of the Una Europa universities that we identified in the strategy benchmarking phases and about the Una Europa current priority areas. In addition, we wanted to provide information about the grand challenges with materials presenting Key strategic orientations and the clusters of the Horizon Europe; Grand challenges materials by Sitra (<https://www.sitra.fi/en/>) and Demos Helsinki; UN Sustainable Development goals (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>). As a technical solution, we used an interactive on-line platform Flinga (<https://flinga.fi/>).

The on-line Workshop consisted of two parts: 1) Keynotes about i)Una Europa, ii) Grand challenges, and iii) The EU's Approach to International R&I Collaboration in a Changing World. 2) Group discussions, where we used on-line canvases to structure the discussion. Each group also had an own facilitator to support the participants.

Besides the aim to create an on-line working format, the workshop advised the Una Europa R&I strategy preparation aimed 1) to identify research themes the Una Europa community deems as important in the future to solve the grand challenges and 2) to identify enablers and barriers to international research collaboration. The outcomes have been presented more in detail in Una.Resin Wp1 deliverable D1.1.

Describe challenges and solutions:

- This type of an on-line co-working as well as the interdisciplinary futures approach was new to most involved both those research professionals involved in planning and facilitating as well as for the academic participants. At the time when we ran the workshop, Una Europa was still quite new and unknown to our community. There was some resistance from the projects side to this kind of pilot and confusion from the researcher's side, what is the purpose of it as it did not link to their current research directly. It simply took time for the participants to orientate to complete new type of working. However, during and after the workshop there was quite some excitement in the air and many of the participants wished for a follow-up workshop in future.
- We saw cultural differences both in how used the participants were with on-line working as well as co-creation type of working. The involvement of researchers from different career stages, research fields and cultural backgrounds was emphasized, but we had to limit the participant number to six per partner university. Unfortunately, not all registered participants showed up and there were participants coming and going. This underlined the essential role of the facilitators and ability to reorganise the groups during the workshop. Due to the tight schedule of the planning, the facilitators were not informed well enough before the workshop and facilitator role was new to many of them too. We had to be creative during the workshops, but we learned a lot. In future the universities should consider designing and facilitation of the



collaborative workshops, both on-line and on-site as one special skill of the research professionals and there could be specific training for it.

- We learned that five participants + the facilitator is a suitable group size. However, it is hard to anticipate the disappearance of the participants during the workshop and there must be a readiness to reform the groups, if needed.
- In future, we should put special emphasis on expanding the target group to citizens and non-academics with diverse backgrounds.
- The pre-assignment turned out to be too complicated providing too many materials.
- Project budget was very limited what came to buying services. We convinced the think tank Demos Helsinki that the case is interesting, and they agreed to support us with low cost as a learning case also for them. We found their experience in society and research connected foresight work very useful and with their support we built a useful workshop format for future use.

Piloting a process Horizon Europe Pillar II Call matchmaking

The initiative to pilot HE pillar II matchmaking came from the Una Europa One Health Focus area self-steering committee and from the Una Europa external funding officer. It fitted perfectly to our aims to further develop the methods to accelerate cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration in addressing the priority challenges and made a good use of the format and the lessons learned from the Una Europa R&I strategy workshop. With this pilot action we could identify institutional structures and processes and pilot the coordination of them.

The whole process from first planning meetings to the evaluation phase lasted from February 2022 until September 2023. The pilot included the following steps: 1) Collecting expressions of interest on-line using Lyyti platform (<https://www.lyyti.com/en/>); 2) Identification and briefing of the potential coordinators; 3) On-line workshop including i) common session highlighting the European goals and the call particularities as well as ii) facilitated group discussion aiming to draft the core idea of the proposal and appointing the core group for the proposal preparation. We used the template created in the R&I strategy workshop (Zoom as a meeting platform and Google Slides for the on-line canvases); 4) Hybrid (on-line and on-site) workshop for the groups of researchers who engaged with proposal preparation (Teams). In this workshop the participants had a change i) to learn about the call particularities and proposal writing in the plenary sessions, ii) get support for the proposal drafting and iii) to participate Una Europa One Health networking event. The workshop was organised in connection to the Una Europa General Assembly; 5) Proposal preparation phase; 6) On-line evaluation questionnaire after the process (Lyyti platform).

The pilot action was designed in close collaboration with several Una Europa bodies in several on-line and on-site meetings and workshops. **The Una Europa Research Coordination Cluster (RCC)** had a pivotal role in understanding the internal processes and shared with us the best practises at their home institutions, like the ideal questions for the expression of interest template. The RCC identified the contact points to reach the academics as well as supporting research funding professionals. The group also had an essential role in advising us with the particularities of the European funding and the local research funding service structures and processes. **The self-steering committee of the One Health focus area** acted as the academic owner of the process. They both provided us important understanding of the needs of the academics participating the process and identified the call themes we worked with. **The Una Europa Vzw external funding manager** supported with identification of the roles of this Una Europa



process and provided us up-to-date information about the Pillar II call preparation status. Una Europa Vzw also supported with identification and invitation of the keynote speaker of the on-line workshop, Jean-Charles Cavitte, Research Policy Officer EC, who presented Insights on policy and EU funded research in the area of One Health. In addition, each academic group preparing a call proposal was supported by an experienced **research funding professionals appointed by two Una Europa universities**, University of Helsinki, and Ku Leuven.

The Una Europa external funding officer made a preselection listing 37 Horizon Europe Pillar II call topics, which were presented to the One Health SSC. In the end four topics were chosen for the process. The invitation to express their interest to these calls topics was then sent to 74 academics representing the Una Europa focus areas. They were asked to share the invitations to their colleagues. It was shared also by the RCC using the internal channels at the partner institutions. In the expression of interest phase, we got 79 answers from five Una Europa universities. Due to minor interest towards one of the topics, three were chosen to the on-line workshop. There we had 35 academic participants from the same five universities and in addition research professionals, who facilitated and followed the workshop. Finally, we had 30 participants in the hybrid meeting, which was aiming to proposal preparation. The evaluation questionnaire was sent to everyone, who received the original invitation to express their interest. We got 12 answers and from the same five universities that were involved from the beginning of the process.

Describe challenges and solutions:

- We wanted to invite researchers from various field to cross the boundaries of the STEM and SSH fields. To do this, we emphasised in the short call descriptions that even if the call subject was One Health related, the SSH input was essential to successful proposal. We advertised the matchmaking to all focus areas and relevant researchers at all universities. Still, mainly natural scientists were interested. The cross-focus area matchmaking should be given a serious consideration in the long-term when the Una Europa focus areas are further developed into research hubs. Also, general awareness of Una Europa and the common communication channels should support this aim. Una Europa could benefit from bi-annual strategic workshops that would include all focus area ssc:s and different career stage researchers. The long-term collaboration allow the emerge of deep understanding that is needed for new knowledge and good proposals.
- The message we got from our research community was, that besides processes for matchmaking, they wished for grant writing support from Una Europa. In this pilot we included both the matchmaking phase as well as the first steps of the proposal preparation. On the course of the pilot, we learned that the partner universities have very different conditions considering the level of support provided for the proposal preparation. In all cases, the most extensive support including the appointed grant writer is provided only to the proposals coordinated by the university. We learned that it is not possible to pool generally this support in Una Europa. One of the nine involved partner universities has internal selection process for the proposals that are coordinated by them; thus, it was important to take care that the Una Europa process is not conflicting with it. This is worth considering also in future when new processes are developed. In this pilot we navigated with the above-mentioned conditions and needs so that we 1) provided general presentations about the Horizon Europe Pilar II particularities 2) we invited grant coaches from the coordinating universities to the on-site workshop at Ku Leuven.



- We planned to use an interactive platform for collecting expressions of interest. The idea was that in an ideal situation the researchers could have initiated the discussion about the research topics already on-line. There were some platforms, like B2B that would have been suitable and reasonable priced, but for our very limited project budget this was still too expensive. Instead, we used on-line questionnaire platform, which allowed us to turn the answers in excel format and in the end to a sharable catalogue. UH appointed additional human resources to do this. In future, if there are more calls, it causes reasonable heavy burden to manually create a shareable catalogues and Una Europa should consider investing in an on-line platform making this phase both easy and interactive.
- The schedule of the pilot was tight, and we needed to go full speed ahead and learn at the same time. This caused confusion especially in the end of the process. The time gap between the on-line and the on-site workshops was short and left little time for travel organisations. The participating academics asked us to organise the meeting in hybrid mode to allow all to participate. We still got feedback: *“Very few attendees were present in Leuven. Interaction through mixed channels (in-person plus on-line) is difficult and time-consuming”* and *“The hybrid mode (online and onsite) especially, was not suitable for in-depth planning and discussion”*. It also caused major confusion that this was an Una Europa signature event, but there was no funding from the projects or alliances side appointed to the travels of the academics. The expectation management failed in this sense. On the other hand we got valuable understanding of the expectations.
- Appointing the coordinators was a difficult step. We got a lot of expressions of interest to participate the call, but few experienced enough researchers were interested to coordinate them. In the evaluation phase, most negative feedback was received about this phase. This was mostly due to the tight schedule. We had very little time to identify and brief the potential coordinators before the on-line workshop. Also, throughout the pilot as well as during the two workshops, we had problem with participants jumping between the call topic groups and not engaging to the groups. This made it hard for the coordinators to identify the “own” group. In future it could make sense to have separate workshops for each topic.
- We got only 12 answers to the evaluation form in the end of the project. We found out that briefing that the information will be used for development purposes is not enough to make the busy academics to provide evaluation insights at least long after they were involved. It could make sense to ask feedback after every stage, when it is still fresh in the memory participants.

2.3 Outcomes and Impact of the pilot project

- *Discuss the key outcomes and impact of the pilot project that has or could induce institutional change.*
- *How have these outcomes/impact addressed the initial aims including enabling barrier-free collaboration in research and innovation?*
- *To what extent has the pilot project been able to translate and synthesise Una.Resin knowledge and innovations into accessible formats?*
- *To what extent has the outcomes of the pilot project (if any) been taken up and/or influenced decision-makers at the various levels – institutional, national, EU (European Union)? Or what institutional, national and EU decisions could be influenced in the future based on this pilot?*

With this pilot we aimed to understand the institutional barriers and enablers to create conditions for barrier-free collaboration. The pilot produced essential understanding for the Una Europa R&I strategy preparation and resulted in two submitted Horizon Europe Pillar II consortium proposals. One of the two



made it to the reserve list. In addition, one proposal was prepared, but not submitted in this round. These are very concrete outcomes. The most important outcome of the pilot, though, considering both actions 1) Una Europa R&I strategy workshop and 2) Piloting a process Horizon Europe Pillar II Call matchmaking was the process itself that is now ready for the future use. The pilot allowed us to develop and test the process structure step by step and to identify needed tools, skills and human resources needed to carry out such creative collaborative interdisciplinary processes.

Una Europa focus areas serve as excellent communities for the creation of interdisciplinary understanding and cross-discipline matchmaking. Matchmaking seems to be particularly effective within the alliance context because there are additional drivers for cooperation e.g. institutional support and strategic alignment. We have already shared the lessons learned with Unite!-alliance and looked for ways to join the forces of our complementary alliances (research intensive universities and technical universities) in the area of sustainability concerning interdisciplinary consortium calls.

Una Europa has called from EC for more bottom-up collaborative research opportunities that are as open as possible in scope and allow for interdisciplinary research perspectives. Una Europa is committed in its strategies (Una Europa 2030 strategy and Una Europa R&I strategy) to bold interdisciplinary research and empowering the vital demographic, early career researchers.

Our pilot provides essential tools and new kind of mindset to explore inter-, trans- and multidisciplinary cooperation around R&I activities in the Una Europa and beyond in the wider ecosystem. The R&I strategy workshop provided an experimental approach to increase the foresight understanding in the academic community and encourage to recognize the weak signals of emerging research areas pivotal for solving the grand challenges of our time. The Horizon Pillar II process takes this to a more practical level and provides concrete tools for matchmaking and proposal ideation.

The feedback from attendees of the **R&I strategy workshop** piloting facilitated co-creation was positive, however some participants found that they lacked skills and traditions for this kind of multi-/interdisciplinary workshop approach and wished for better introduction to this kind of working method. We found that research themes raised in this workshop were often crosscutting several grand challenges reflecting the scientific understanding that these challenges are interlinked and cannot be treated as separate phenomena. Terminologies and approaches such as “grand challenges” are hence not always the most fruitful way to engage researchers in this kind of workshop. Researchers formulate their interests within the terminology and culture of their discipline. Una Europa is in an excellent position to share understanding between the research community and European decision makers.

The participants of the **Horizon Europe Pillar II Call matchmaking** represented five of the (at the time) nine Una Europa universities. Not getting expressions of interest from four of the universities reflects partly the activity in the One Health focus area, but also the difference in the funding policies in the different partner countries. In some, there is a strong national funding base and horizon calls are considered administratively heavy and thus not desired. In addition, at the time of our pilot, our UK member was not sure, if the university is eligible for Horizon Europe funding. However, the evaluation showed that the pilot was found most successful in “establishing new contacts” and “learning about consortium-based proposal preparation”. This is a remarkable outcome.

In particular, the process provides an equal opportunity for the early career researchers to widen their networks. Una Europa stands for diversity, academic freedom and well-being. The approach where initiative to express interest comes from Una Europa may help some to overcome institutional barriers

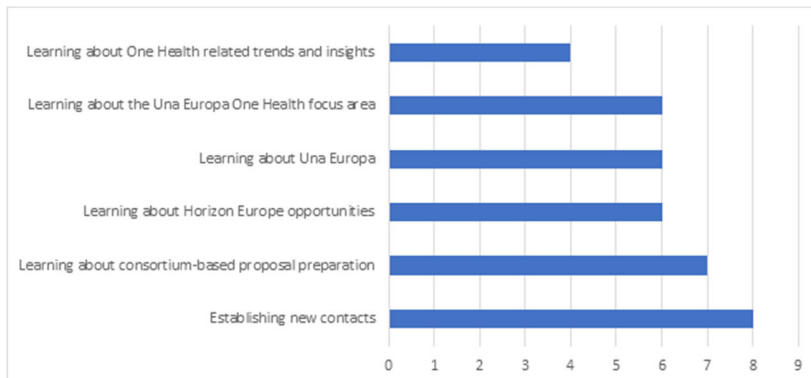


and hierarchies. The process also provides the early career researcher an opportunity to learn about the proposal process and the Horizon projects preparing them to become coordinators themselves in the future.

Researchers' feedback to the Una Europa pilot on Horizon Europe matchmaking

Consultation dates: 20.6-15.9.2023

I found the pilot helpful for (multiple answers allowed):

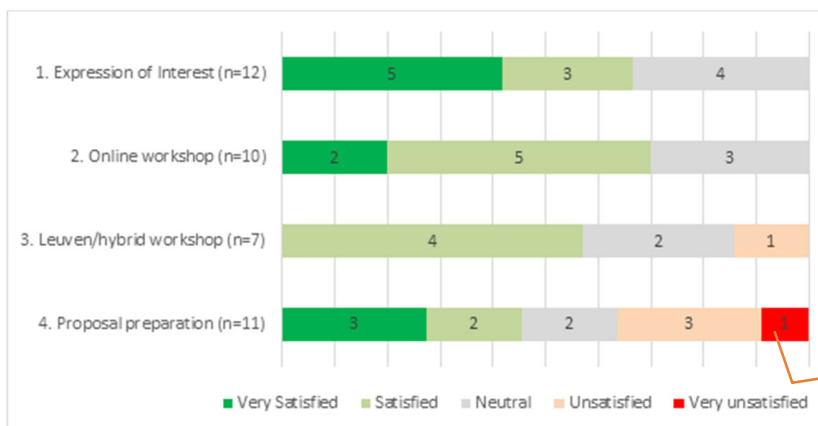


"In general the whole strategy was well devised. With the lessons learned we for sure can refine and mature this approach to have a winning recipe for funding."

"The Una Europa pilot for matchmaking was useful to discover opportunities and get to know complementary research teams in participating Universities. Sadly enough, the mechanics of the proposal preparation were not targeted enough towards a winner application (as it happens in other proposals outside the Una Europa umbrella...)."

"The idea to support proposal building for EU calls is great but I think the process need to start earlier to allow the participants to really connect and know each other. More work with the potential coordinators in the beginning to consider the proposal text and scope."

How satisfied were you with the different pilot phases?



*3 of the 4 unsatisfied respondents worked in a proposal that was not submitted

Satisfaction with the Online Workshop

	Yes	No	I don't know
Was the structure of the workshop appropriate?	10	0	0
Did you find the templates and facilitation appropriate?	9	0	1
Did you find the presentations useful?	10	0	0
Did you find the technical platforms appropriate (Zoom & Google sheets)?	9	3	4



2.1

2.2 Sustainability of the pilot project

- *How, when, and under what conditions will the insights and outcomes delivered through the pilot project be replicated/scaled up or continued?*
- *How do you intend to scale up this project after the end of the programme?*
- *What has been the cost-benefits analyses of the pilot actions? Elaborate on recommendations to national and European policy on the way forward.*

In the coming years, Una Europa focus areas are developing into interdisciplinary hubs for research and education. The hubs widen the ecosystem beyond academia to the local actors in the partner countries. In this co-creation of the strategic understanding and cross-focus area matchmaking is in pivotal role. The **Una Europa R&I strategy format** supports this work perfectly. The workshop format could be useful also as part of continuous collaborative strategic work that is essential for this kind of alliance. However, there is not yet recognised owner for this process in our community to facilitate such workshop.

We are very confident that the **Horizon Pillar II matchmaking process** will be scaled up to a continuous Una Europa process. This process was included as a recommended action in the Una Europa R&I Funding Pathway (Una Europa R&I strategy Annex 1, WP1 Delivery 1.2.). As part of the R&I strategy implementation Roadmap (Una Europa R&I strategy Annex 2, WP1 Delivery 1.2.), the Una Europa partner institutions are currently discussing, how the activities to implement the Una Europa R&I strategy should be prioritised. This process was prioritised with highest score by the Una Europa vice rectors of research in their meeting 11th October 2023.

Una Europa Research coordination cluster (RCC), the expert group of research funding advisors, has now been appointed as a permanent Una Europa body. This is largely because of the learnings we gained in this pilot and the RCC has already taken ownership of the matchmaking process. There is also natural continuity as University of Helsinki was the responsible organisation in this pilot and the RCC is chaired by UH as well thus we will make sure that all lessons learned, and the formats created will be handed over to the future users.

The Una Europa focus areas are excellent incubators of interdisciplinary ideas and understanding. Still, the Pillar II topics are very defined, and there may be rather short time to prepare the proposals after the call is announced. This leads to suboptimal processes and make it difficult to ensure inclusivity of matchmaking. Bottom-up interdisciplinary funding would solve this. The research community is on top of the insights and Europe should take advantage of it.

The non-academic collaborations are crucial to the successful consortium proposals and one of the ambitious aims of the Una.Resin project was to find ways to collaborate with the non-academic partners throughout the UNA Europa R&I ecosystem. However, developing such an ecosystem takes time. At the stage of the pilot planning, we did not have a ready ecosystem to reach out to. As our primary aim was to learn about the structures and processes at the partner universities and to pilot the process on the Una Europa level, we decided to restrict the participation to pilot activities to the Una Europa level but invited some external key-note speakers. As a next step, the process should be further developed on an institutional level to build ways to systematically identify infrastructures and non-academic collaborations relevant for the proposals. Support to Pillar II and other major European research funding opportunities should be pro-active and the highest priority concerning the new Vzw External Funding Officer's working time allocation. Alliance level industry collaboration, like common



fairs, is not a priority at this stage but should be a longer-term goal. Connection with ecosystems of industry and societal actors should be linked to the activities of the academic Hubs like doctoral education activities and funding calls.

Una Europa institutions are global actors, and as an alliance, we have an even broader reach. Understanding this reach as a responsibility and opportunity to address global challenges from diverse perspectives, Una Europa aims to establish multi-lateral global partnerships and engage with global talent. The collaboration with the Una Europa strategic partner higher education institutions in Africa is progressively taking shape. In this pilot, the coordinators already involved some of their African partners. In future, Una Europa should involve the African partner institutions to the match-making more systematically. In addition, Una Europa should stand in line with the partners in solving the mobility issues, like visas, of the African collaborators in participating the events organised in Europe.

5 Lessons learned

- Participants of both the R&I strategy workshop as well as the Horizon Europe Pillar II matchmaking process were very eager and pleased to work together, confirming there is a vast, largely untapped potential for this type of Una Europa-led research collaboration
- In the Horizon Europe Pillar II matchmaking process Una Europa External funding offices and the RCC as a permanent body should support 1) Identification of the topics and coordinators 2) Collection of the Eols 3) Matchmaking workshops 3) General info-session about the funding instrument. The proposal writing support, including grant writer resources and potential travel funds, on the other hand should be provided by the coordinating university. This must be communicated clearly.
- Due to the Una.Resin project schedules, The One Health SSC meeting schedules as well as Una Europa general assembly schedules, the Pillar II matchmaking process was started too late leaving little time between the two workshops and identification of the coordinators. In future, the process must be begun much ahead the tentative deadlines. However, the consolidation of research cooperation in focus areas and increased awareness of the alliance among the academic community should also contribute to the readiness to prepare joint applications.
- Organising these kind of workshops or processes takes a lot of time and asks for understanding of context and networks. The process and the tools are not enough, but skilled facilitators and systematic communication is a key for success. It is important to make sure that the universities appoint working time of the RCC members and other relevant professionals for facilitation of workshop and processes.
- Co-creation and futures approach, as well as on-line workshops are new to many academics. As an example, we wanted to introduce to Una Europa an approach, where the workshop starts with discussion instead of passive listening. In this way the participants become owners of the workshop rather than passive followers. This was confusing to most as we are used to that other set the agenda and the tone of the workshop. Still, participants were in the end very satisfied to collaborate and build ideas together. Una Europa should pay attention to the innovative pedagogics also in future, even if it is not always to most obvious way to run the workshops.



6 Recommendation for the future

- There is a need for online platform allowing interactive collection of Expressions of interest. Una Europa could use an existing platform and the European platforms could be also developed. In short term, Una Europa should also share links to the research portals of each partner university. In longer term Una Europa could develop a way to harvest existing data from the research portals to support matchmaking. There are capabilities to develop this even in the alliance.
- The universities should consider designing and facilitation of the collaborative workshops, both on-line and on-site as one special skill of the research professionals. There could be specific training for it.
- Una Europa must pay more attention to matching SSH+STEM and fields and foster the cross-focus area collaboration. Our communication emphasising this seemed not to be enough, but this mindset needs to further encouraged in our alliance.
- Una Europa should consider ways to fund mobility aiming to consortium building. The current situation, where some universities and some fields have funding and others do not, create inequality and is a barrier for excellence.
- Una Europa should put special emphasis to develop ways on an institutional level to involve non-academic collaborators to the consortium on an institutional level.

