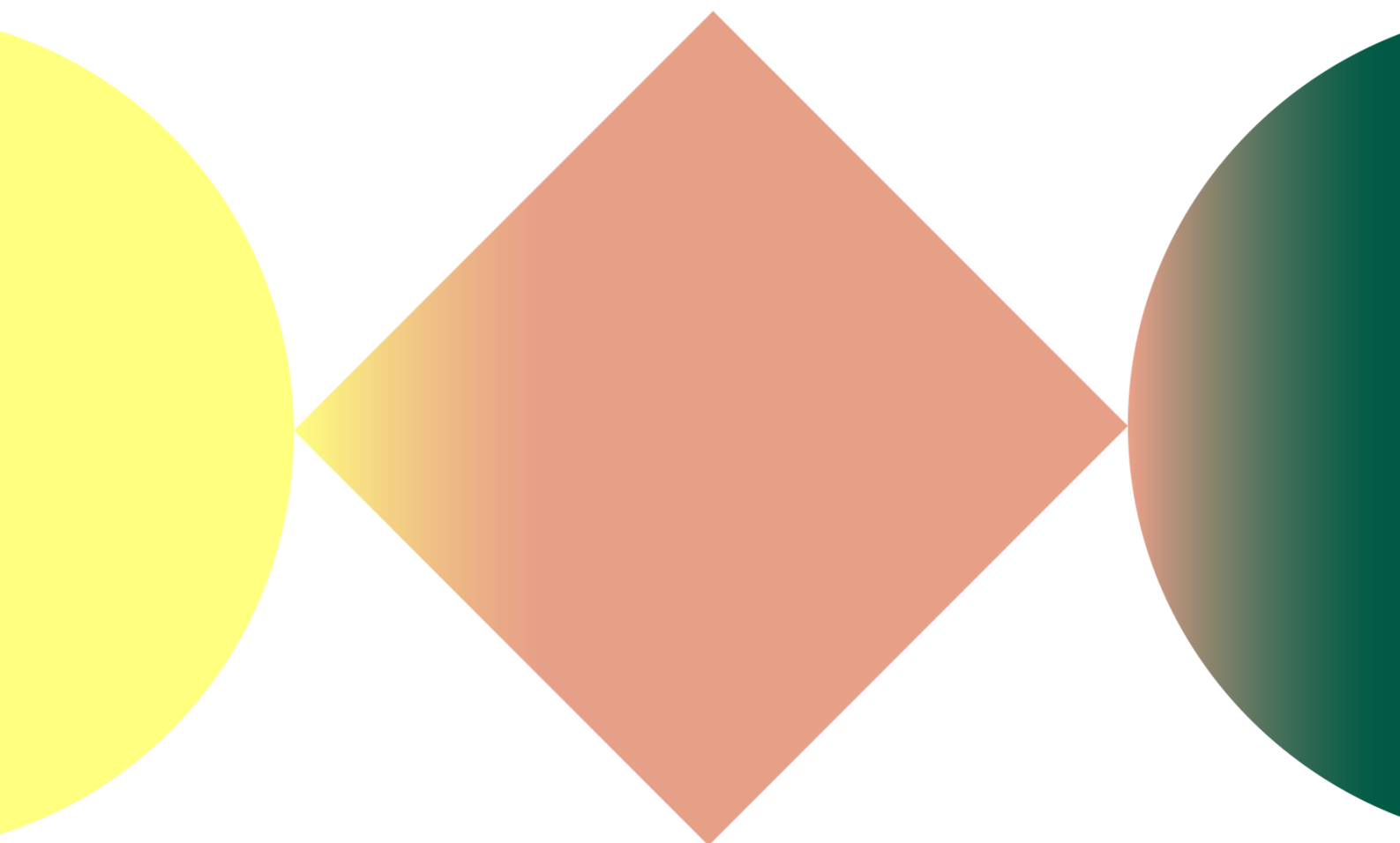


# Una Europa Research & Innovation Strategy



Collaborating in Research for the Future

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# Collaborating in Research for the Future

Freie Universität Berlin | Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna | University College Dublin/An Coláiste Ollscoile Baile Átha Cliath | University of Edinburgh | Helsingin yliopisto/Helsingfors universitet | Uniwersytet Jagielloński w Krakowie | Universiteit Leiden | KU Leuven | Universidad Complutense de Madrid | Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne | Universität Zürich have joined forces as Una Europa, a unique alliance of leading European universities. Together, we represent one of the strongest research-intensive European University Alliances of its kind. Since its establishment in 2019, the Alliance has grown in size, gathered valuable experience, and deepened collaboration through EU-funded projects and other strategic initiatives developed by our partner universities.

Una Europa's ambition is to create a European inter-university campus that encompasses education, research, innovation and societal outreach in a holistic manner. Embracing institutional and cultural diversity, our goal is to foster the sharing of physical and digital spaces, infrastructure, resources, and best practices to collectively pursue excellence. Our alliance is founded on long-standing collaboration and strong connections across various initiatives and stakeholders. We are committed to establishing a framework for systematic collaboration seamlessly integrated into institutional structures and workflows, bolstering research and innovation capabilities also through professional and institutional capacity building. The networks of dedicated professional staff, a hallmark of Una Europa's innovative approach, serve as the backbone of our alliance, providing expertise and support for our collaborative endeavours.

Large-scale research collaboration plays a vital role in tackling the complex and ever-evolving global challenges confronting our planet. These challenges require insights that transcend the limitations of individual research questions. As research-intensive universities, we are at the forefront of generating profound knowledge and innovative solutions to address the intractable issues of our time and future. With our extensive network of global partners, Una Europa presents a unique opportunity to leverage our complementary strengths and engage in cutting-edge collaborative research. Together, we have the potential to achieve meaningful outcomes for our societies and the world at large.

Our alliance's vision for the current decade is set by the Una Europa 2030 Strategy. The strategy identifies institutional priorities within three strategic pillars that ensure sustained collaboration beyond the lifespan of individual projects: I: Enhancing collaboration in research and innovation. II: Consolidating a future education model rooted in challenges, research, and interdisciplinarity. III: Promoting innovative science communication and strengthening public engagement.

Building upon these pillars, this Research & Innovation Strategy sets out the following strategic areas of action required to cultivate a research and innovation ecosystem that promotes collaborative interdisciplinary research by 2030:

## 1: Strengthening the Una Europa Focus Areas

- Establishing Interdisciplinary Hubs
- Training Researchers of the Future
- Strengthening Collaboration Beyond Academia

## 2: Engaging Researchers Broadly

- Supporting Bottom-Up Initiatives
- Promoting Mobility and Community Building
- Digitalizing Collaboration

## 3: Opening up Research and Data Infrastructures

- Promoting openness of RIs and data infrastructures to foster research collaboration
- Strengthening Research and Data Infrastructure Skills
- Developing a stronger and more integrated Una Europa Research Infrastructure Ecosystem

# Our Research Values

Each area of activity embraces crosscutting values that form the foundation of our shared identity as a values-driven alliance. These values shape our research approach and align with the institutional priorities outlined in the 2030 Strategy. They encompass diversity and human dignity, academic freedom, open research, individual well-being, environmental sustainability, organizational resilience, and global engagement.

## **Diversity and Human Dignity**

Una Europa is united in diversity. Diversity, taken as a concept, acknowledges the multidimensional differences between people that are shaped by social categories. We firmly believe that diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential prerequisites for fostering truly excellent research. Guided by the expertise of our Diversity Council, we are dedicated to integrating diversity considerations in all our programs and actions. While our prestigious institutions have a proven ability to attract world-class talent, we critically assess the existing conditions for success and strive to create an environment where diverse talents can flourish within our multilingual setting. We are also committed to breaking down implicit hierarchical distinctions between academic and professional staff and fostering genuine team-based approaches to research.

## **Academic Freedom**

As representatives of leading publicly funded research-intensive institutions of higher education, we wholeheartedly uphold the principles of academic freedom, ethical research, truth, integrity, and inclusivity. Our community is fuelled by the intrinsic curiosity that drives bottom-up exploration and recognizes the inseparable connection between education and research. Embracing the essence of academic freedom, we are committed to empowering our researchers to embark on bold and unconventional ventures that transcend conventional methodologies.

## **Open Research**

Una Europa embraces the principles of open research across all levels of collaboration and training, while taking into account the specific needs of different disciplines. We strive to establish a framework for open research that serves as a catalyst for strategic decision-making, innovative methodologies, and fruitful collaborations among institutions and researchers. Our strategic priorities align with the ambitions of the European Union's Open Science policy, particularly in the domains of FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable), open data sharing, open access to publications, the European Open Science Cloud, mutual learning, education and skills, as well as citizen science. Committed to fostering knowledge exchange and collaboration between universities and non-academic stakeholders, including citizens and industry, we value open dialogue that embraces diverse perspectives. By actively engaging with different communities, we seek to mutually benefit from collaboration and contribute to the advancement of knowledge and societal progress.

## **Individual Well-Being**

Individual well-being is paramount in enabling students, researchers, teachers, and professional staff to thrive. Una Europa is deeply committed to cultivating an environment where individuals can actualize their full potential. We prioritize the promotion of work-life balance, diverse career opportunities, fair policies, and people-centric procedures. These commitments extend to all aspects of our Alliance, ensuring the well-being and fulfilment of our community members.

## **Delivering Environmental Sustainability**

Sustainability, in all its aspects, lies at the heart of Una Europa's mission. It serves as a fundamental objective within the Una Europa 2030 Strategy and permeates our research and teaching priorities, governance, and work processes. To solidify our commitment to sustainability, we have established the Una Europa Sustainability and Climate Protection Task Force. This task force harnesses its expertise to guide our community in integrating the United Nations' agenda for the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into their daily endeavours, as well as in the creation of innovative projects and formats.

## **Ensuring Organisational Resilience**

To promote financial and institutional resilience, our collaboration approach adheres to principles of efficiency, effectiveness, simplicity, scalability, and feasibility. We prioritize areas where collaboration yields significant added

value and remain dedicated to streamlined processes. We incentivize researchers and professionals alike to actively contribute to shaping the vibrant Una Europa research community.

### Acting Globally

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. We intend to collaborate with our international strategic partners for mutual benefit, leveraging synergies and expertise from all parties involved. Our open approach to collaboration with higher education institutions in Africa is gradually taking shape and will serve as a foundation and inspiration for further consolidating and exploring joint collaborations with other like-minded universities in different regions of the world, such as Latin America.

# Advancing Collaborative Interdisciplinary Research: Areas of Action

## 1: Strengthening the Una Europa Focus Areas

Una Europa, as a community deeply committed to long-term collaboration and endowed with a wealth of talented individuals, is uniquely positioned to foster collaboration among researchers from diverse cultural backgrounds who explore shared topics through distinct disciplinary lenses. The Una Europa Focus Areas represent interdisciplinary fields that unite researchers from partner institutions across a wide spectrum of disciplines. Our support services and policies will prioritise promoting academic collaboration within these areas, empowering researchers to jointly pursue basic and applied research to tackle complex challenges.

Until 2030, the Alliance has chosen the following Focus Areas: Cultural Heritage, Sustainability, Data Science and Artificial Intelligence, Europe and the World, One Health, and Future Materials. These areas reflect some of the most pressing global and societal challenges and high-level priorities of the European Union. Simultaneously, they allow intrinsic curiosity and innovation necessary for addressing emerging challenges in the future.

### Establishing Interdisciplinary Hubs

In the coming years, the academic Self-steering Committees of the Focus Areas (SSCs) will undergo a transformation into interdisciplinary hubs. These hubs will actively engage the wider Una Europa community, fostering academic collaboration not only within the Alliance but also with global partners. This transformation aims to realize our ambition of addressing education, research, innovation, and societal outreach in a comprehensive manner. The priorities set by the SSCs will guide the development of Una Europa support networks and the Investment Pathway, which will identify the necessary resources for the successful implementation of these activities.

The SSCs, in collaboration with the professional staff, will work towards the development of **Una Europa signature formats** for education and research within our Alliance. These formats can be applied across different Focus Areas and encompass activities such as summer and winter schools, research semesters, grant matchmaking, science events, digital catalogues, and programs focused on transversal skills. By establishing these common formats, we can establish robust processes for support, resource allocation, and communication. Additionally, these formats create valuable opportunities for academics to come together, fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration and generating new research ideas across various career stages.

Una Europa distinguishes itself as an alliance of research universities that house influential research centres, institutes, and initiatives committed to interdisciplinary approaches. Several of these initiatives are explicitly designed to foster



multi-, trans-, or interdisciplinary research. By strengthening **collaboration among these existing initiatives** and fostering connections with the Una Europa Focus Areas, our alliance aspires to become a trailblazer in large-scale collaborative research and set a benchmark for the European Research Area.

When considering the **establishment of new Una Europa Focus Areas**, several important factors will guide the decision-making process. These factors include the potential of the suggested Focus Area to attract researchers from diverse disciplines, its capacity to become a leader in the field of inquiry, opportunities for collaboration with existing interdisciplinary initiatives and centres, and its potential to facilitate joint formats. Throughout this process, we will foster active participation and exchange of ideas by engaging our broad research community, specific stakeholders, and the Una Europa's Future UniLab.

## Training Researchers of the Future

Being the future of academia early-career researchers play a pivotal role in shaping the research landscape of tomorrow. With our ability to offer a wide range of training opportunities across partner institutions, Una Europa is uniquely positioned to empower this vital demographic with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in the evolving academic environment and diversify their career opportunities. As such, investing in the training of early career researchers is a strategic priority for Una Europa.

Una Europa will continue developing **joint educational formats** that promote the acquisition of **interdisciplinary skills and collaborative research**. Not only necessitates this work the command of different research methods, epistemological frameworks, and publishing cultures, but also do dynamics and timeframes of interdisciplinary research collaboration differ from research based on the single disciplinary tradition. In all Una Europa signature projects, doctoral students will be included early on to grow their knowledge of **collaborative research**. To promote interdisciplinary research, we urgently need to address **career risks** that early-career researchers in particular are exposed to when pursuing interdisciplinary projects. To this end, Una Europa partners will seek solutions to the challenge of interdisciplinary academic positions in university departments that are defined by traditional disciplines.

Our goal is to ensure that **open research** becomes second nature to all our researchers. To achieve this, we aim to provide necessary skills training to incorporate open research routines and practices seamlessly into their work. This will include guidance on how to evaluate research outputs without relying on traditional metrics like journal impact factor, methods of citizen science and research FAIR data management skills. Training shall be integrated into educational pathways and relevant activities of the Focus Areas.

The very principles of **research assessment** require reform to allow our researchers to conduct the research of the future: bold, diversified, collaborative, and impactful. We are committed to promoting the inclusion of interdisciplinary research, open science and collaboration with society and industry as markers of excellence in research assessment. As part of this commitment, Una Europa supports research assessment reform endeavors such as the Agreement of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment, of which many of our partner universities are signatories.

## Strengthening Collaboration Beyond Academia

Breaking down disciplinary thinking through collaborative research in our Focus Areas is a fundamental to develop comprehensive solutions to societal challenges. Equally important is collaboration with non-academic partners to ensure the transfer of knowledge and the application of research findings in society. This is also recognized by grant agencies which increasingly ask for stakeholder inclusion. Una Europa is hence committed to fostering knowledge exchange and collaboration between university and non-academic actors, including citizens and industry. Through open dialogue, we seek to address the perspectives of diverse communities and bring the benefit of collaboration to both sides.

Together, the eco-systems of our partner universities offer a unique opportunity for collaborative research teams to establish new relations with non-academic partners. Nurturing partnerships with non-academic actors demands the dedicated commitment of numerous individuals, with the rewards often materializing over the long haul. To fully harness the strengths of our diverse ecosystems, our knowledge and technology transfer services will jointly support Una Europa projects during and after the pre-award phase. Moreover, our objective is to consolidate resources to



create training programs focused on impactful public engagement. These programs will encompass different transfer formats including citizen science, science communication, and policy advocacy, and will be seamlessly integrated into our Una Europa educational formats. By doing so, we will open up new avenues of knowledge transfer and foster the development of social and technological innovations.

## 2: Engaging Researchers Broadly

Una Europa is an alliance by and for every member of our partner universities. Along with supporting the Focus Areas, we are committed to become an inspiring and well-established collaboration framework for researchers of our partners broadly. In that way, we can promote diversity and inclusion in research, which is crucial for ensuring that research reflects the perspectives and experiences of a diverse range of people from all disciplines, career stages and backgrounds.

### Supporting Bottom-Up Research

Una Europa nurtures bold research that pursues new avenues. To support this within but also beyond the Focus Areas, Una Europa will develop tools to **incentivize bottom-up research initiatives** and **broaden the involvement of researchers**. This will include regular seed-funding calls, facilitation of funding-specific matchmaking actions and distribution of national funding opportunities. By means of systematic and effective communication through central and institutional channels we aim to increase the distribution of Una Europa opportunities.

### Promoting Mobility and Community Building

Una Europa provides an unmatched opportunity for researchers to flourish in an international, intercultural environment. Through our alliance, researchers of any stage can **diversify and grow their disciplinary and interdisciplinary networks**. Una Europa encourages low-threshold informal connections by the virtue of membership in the alliance and will, in addition, strategically support community building. Not only in getting together, but in doing something together lies the true value of our alliance.

Firstly, community building is encouraged through the many virtual and physical **Una Europa signature activities**—ranging from summer schools to Una Europa talks and gatherings. These events are opportunities to promote valuable exchange between research professionals and researchers. Secondly, we will continue to enhance the institutional capacity to invest in mobility opportunities. Una Europa will develop a joint virtual and physical **mobility framework** for students, researchers and professional staff, including both short- and long-term mobility and to explore and utilize existing EU and national mobility schemes. We will put specific emphasis on creating possibilities for exchanges as visiting scholars and through Una Chairs and joint Institute for Advanced Studies initiatives. Moreover, Una Europa will develop coordinated support for Marie Curie fellowship opportunities for early-career researchers. The alliance is also committed to systematically **share information on career and funding opportunities** at Una Europa institutions, including national schemes available for early-career researchers coming both from EU and non-EU countries. In the long-term Una Europa will develop **mentoring programs** for early-career researchers and research professionals who will be matched with a mentor from an Una Europa member institution or one of our partners.

### Digitalizing Collaboration

Digitizing collaboration is crucial to build a sustainable, ever-closer community. Our aim is to develop a comprehensive virtual platform which will aid community building across all Una Europa groups, address research-specific needs and host already existing or newly developed online training courses for researchers and research professionals. To meet the needs of current collaborative Una Europa research projects in a timely manner, such as cloud storage, sharing expressions of interest for funding calls and navigation to our partner universities' research portals, Una Europa will expand the utility of the Una Europa website and deploy commercially and publicly available products. In the medium term, we require a tool for sharing information on research and data infrastructures. In the long term, we aim to further facilitate efficient matchmaking between researchers, research groups, and interdisciplinary units by developing AI-based tools that collect data from our partner universities' research portals, also addressing the legal barriers.

## 3: Opening up Research and Data Infrastructures

Una Europa acknowledges the pivotal role of research and data infrastructures in driving collaborative research. We are committed to promoting the accessibility and interoperability of research infrastructures (RIs) within our alliance as well as facilitating the storage, sharing, and data access in order to enhance research capacity, foster collaboration across the alliance and beyond, and ensure the long-term sustainability of RIs that are essential to research activities in our Focus Areas. To comprehensively address these aspects, we have developed the Una Europa Research Infrastructure Strategy, which outlines a common framework of actions structured around the following three key initiatives.

### Promoting Openness of Research Infrastructures to Foster Research Collaboration

To promote the openness of RIs and data infrastructures, we aim to coordinate efforts in overcoming legal, financial, organizational, technical and cultural barriers that restrict the sharing of research and data infrastructures within and across institutions. We will conduct a **comprehensive analysis of barriers and enablers**, including an in-depth investigation of costing/business models and legal issues related to opening and sharing data, especially clinical data. The insights gained from this analysis will inform the development of common solutions, guiding principles, and scalable models, which will be incorporated into a Una Europa Charter for RIs.

We will also support the development of a strong **RI community** through physical mobility, networking, matchmaking formats, and the exchange of best practices. These initiatives will foster structured synergies in specific thematic areas and contribute to the effective management of RI across and beyond the alliance. Additionally, we will establish a data community to operationalize FAIR data principles at both theme-specific and institutional levels.

Furthermore, we will collaboratively create **tools for sharing information on Una Europa RIs**, facilitating cross-institutional access and visibility for external users, including actors from the private, public sector, and civil society. To achieve this, we will develop in the medium to long term a common Una Europa digital catalogue of RIs and a portal of services.

### Strengthening Research and Data Infrastructure Skills

Sharing infrastructures will incentivize networking and training, benefiting our entire research community. We will strategically invest in continuously **advancing the skills** of our research infrastructure managers and data experts. Our approach will involve mutual learning processes within the research infrastructures and data community, adopting a peer learning approach. This will include exchange of knowledge and best practices through virtual, and physical mobility and processes towards more structured mobility and exchange formats. Additionally, we will establish training activities for the RIs and data community, collaborating with projects such as RiTrainPlus to create structured training programs that **facilitate career paths and professional development** in RI and data management.

### Developing a Stronger and Integrated Una Europa Research Infrastructure Ecosystem

To develop a stronger and more integrated Una Europa Research Infrastructures Ecosystem, we aim to adopt joint visions for opening and sharing of RIs, working towards the promotion of **common guiding principles** outlined in the Una Europa Charter for RIs. In addition, we will engage in awareness-raising actions that can drive a broader cultural change and promote openness, fostering collaborative research. Furthermore, we will **advocate for improved RI policies and funding landscape at the European level**, with a specific focus on supporting small-medium sized RIs characteristic of higher education institutions. This will be done by creating synergy with the initiatives of relevant research associations and in collaboration with other European University Alliances.





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