



# Applied Sciences for the Union of Skills

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EURASHE



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## List of acronyms

BFUG	Bologna Follow-Up Group
CoVEs	Centres of Vocational Excellence
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sports and Culture
DG EMPL	Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
DG RTD	Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
EQD	European Qualification Framework
ERA	European Research Area
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
EU	European Union
JRC	European Commission's Joint Research Centre
ICT	Information and communication technology
ILA	Individual Learning Account
MSCA	Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action
NQF	National Qualification Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
S3	Smart Specialisation Strategies
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
UAS	Universities of Applied Sciences
VET	Vocational Education and Training



## Applied Sciences for the Union of Skills

*Talent is equally spread in Europe, but opportunities are not.*

### 1. Skills and Universities of Applied Sciences

EURASHE welcomes the central place of skills in the political priorities of the European Commission, notably **competitiveness**. As one of the key stakeholders of the European Higher Education Area, as well as the European Education and Research Areas, EURASHE stands ready to promote the role – and further build capacity – in Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) for the implementation of the Union of Skills.

People's skills and competences lie at the heart of European competitiveness, with education, training, and skills systems being a cornerstone of economic growth, nourished and fueled by the European talent pool. One of Europe's strengths is its resilient education systems and the ability to deliver innovative learning and teaching. However, fragmented governance has resulted in **silos between different levels and systems of education**, hindering skills development, cooperation, and mobility.

Education is a competence of European Union (EU) Member States, but they all face the same challenges, even though they are **experienced differently between and within countries**. The transformation of jobs impacts everyone, and it is essential that we come together to collaborate on European solutions to address these common challenges.

UAS play a unique and powerful role in addressing these challenges. They **combine knowledge with practice-based learning in key sectors** of the European economy that face skills shortages such as engineering, healthcare, IT, and the creative industries. They bridge the gap between higher education and Vocational Education and Training (VET), providing flexible learning pathways for all age groups.

Constant job evolution reinforces the need for **agile higher education institutions like UAS** that are close to the world of work and able to continuously update curricula, ensuring that graduates are equipped both with the most relevant up-to-date skills as well as the horizontal, transversal, and future-proof competencies.

At EURASHE, we firmly believe that **talent is everywhere—and that opportunities should be, too**. That is why we are committed to nurturing and unlocking individual talent and collective potential through high-quality education and skills ecosystems. **We will work with the European Commission and national governments to make the Union of Skills a reality**. This document, including a summary table at the end, provides information on how this will be done.

## 2. Strand A: Building skills for quality lives and jobs

### 2.1. Increasing accessibility of higher education [2027]

EURASHE believes that fostering inclusion and expanding access to higher education are essential for equipping individuals with the skills necessary to drive both economic competitiveness and social cohesion.

By ensuring that diverse learner groups – including underrepresented and non-traditional students – participate in higher education, societies can better address skill gaps, support innovation, and enhance workforce adaptability to economic and technological changes. Moreover, greater inclusivity strengthens social cohesion by reducing inequalities, fostering a more resilient and skilled population, and thus contributing to sustainable development.

Flexible learning pathways and applied-oriented higher education programmes also play a major role in broadening access and increasing participation in education and training.

- EURASHE members are committed to promoting and developing **support services** for learners of all ages, providing tailored assistance to help them succeed.
- By focusing on the success and well-being of students, UAS contribute to a more inclusive, adaptable, and resilient society.
- We look forward to the European Commission's proposal to coordinate our efforts to strengthen inclusion.

### 2.2. Teacher shortages. European competence framework for academic staff [2026]

Addressing teacher shortages is critical to sustaining the development of high-level skills, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), applied sciences, and cross-disciplinary fields. To maintain the quality and relevance of education, targeted funding should be used to attract and retain educators – including industry professionals – ensuring real-world expertise is integrated into learning.

The permeability of academic careers extends across different institutions within the same sector and the same European country, various types of higher education institutions, diverse sectors such as academia, industry, and society, and across national boundaries. A skills and employability-based approach could enhance permeability, supported by a European competence framework for academic staff, defined by a broad understanding of education, knowledge-transfer, innovation and cooperation.

While UAS staff require competences similar to those in all higher education institutions, they focus more on applied knowledge and engaging with partners from the world of work. Their experience can help strengthen the competence framework, benefiting all types of academics as their roles diversify and become increasingly more digital.

- We welcome the **European competence framework** for academic staff in higher education, that will revalorise pedagogical roles in academia.
- EURASHE will actively collaborate with the team developing this framework, articulating the experiences of its members, including Hochschullehrerbund, the professional association of UAS staff in Germany.

### 2.3. STEM Education Strategic Plan [Q1 2025]

UAS are key players in providing STEM qualifications, education, and training, particularly in fields critical for the green and digital transitions. They equip students with advanced STEM skills essential for the future of work, including through professional doctorates.

We face challenges, including a decline in information and communication technology (ICT) and STEM students, as well as shortages of doctoral graduates in these fields. At the same time, there is a growing demand for professionals in engineering, manufacturing, and construction.

By leveraging their expertise, knowledge, and capabilities, UAS can play a key role in: developing a comprehensive STEM competence framework, advancing the establishment joint transnational programs for engineers, expanding micro-credentials, and deploying STEM bootcamps. Additionally, EURASHE will support the creation of **STEM Skills Foundries and mentorship programmes** for student entrepreneurs, fostering innovation and bridging the gap between education and industry.

- EURASHE will support the deployment of the STEM Strategy by providing input based on the experiences of its members.
- EURASHE will support the establishment of a **European degree for engineers**, deployment of joint transnational programs and micro-credentials in STEM, bootcamps and Skills Foundries by leveraging its network to bring together academic experts, industry leaders, and professionals to deliver cutting-edge training in relevant skills.

## 2.4. Skills for democratic resilience

To be prepared in the face of global crises, UAS offer education and training that promote digital literacy, basic cybersecurity, advanced STEM skills, and AI literacy, thus playing an important role in tackling the issues of online safety, digital well-being, and combating disinformation and misinformation. Through these efforts, UAS do not only respond to current needs, but also equip students with the skills necessary for success in an increasingly changing and digital world, while strengthening democratic resilience.

## 3. Strand B: Upskill and reskill to ensure future-orientated skills

The world of work is rapidly evolving due to increased mobility, collaboration, multi-disciplinary teams, and ongoing digitalisation and automation. These changes require quick adaptation, which can be facilitated through flexible learning pathways and short, practical learning experiences.

UAS play a crucial role in addressing the rapid transformation of skills needs, by being closely connected to businesses and anticipating industry needs and challenges. Through innovative curriculum development and delivering up-to-date and relevant programs in collaboration with business, including microcredentials, UAS equip people with transversal, horizontal, relevant, and future-ready skills.

### 3.1. Flexible learning pathways and adult learning. Expand the use of micro-credentials and implementation of Individual Learning Accounts

The expansion of micro-credentials and Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) across Member States requires better integration into National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) and the European Qualification Framework (EQF), alongside targeted support measures to address challenges in areas where uptake remains low. This includes embedding micro-credentials in guidance services, advancing ILAs, and reinforcing external quality assurance mechanisms. Expanding their use across diverse learning settings, while maintaining alignment with lifelong learning strategies and existing quality assurance frameworks, will further strengthen their role within education and training systems.

To accelerate the implementation of micro-credentials across Europe, a coordinated approach is essential. At the same time, a more consistent approach to defining micro-credentials is necessary, as variations – such as those imposed ECTS limits – risk creating barriers to cross-border collaboration and the development of joint credentials.



- EURASHE advocates for micro-credentials, promotion and the recognition of short-cycle higher education, ILAs, and work-based learning. These elements are crucial for addressing diverse learning needs and are supported by EURASHE's development of quality principles and tools.

### 3.2. Pilot transnational university-business partnerships for sectors with severe skills gaps [2026]

Industry-driven projects, work-based learning and collaboration between HE and the labour market are essential for fostering skills and meeting the demand of growing sectors.

UAS have long-established successful partnerships with business, ensuring that education aligns with evolving industry skill needs. These collaborations enable universities to access cutting-edge equipment and technologies, ensuring students train with the latest industry standards. In turn, both the private and public sectors benefit from a skilled talent pipeline, applied research, and access to scientific infrastructure.

University-business partnerships thrive on dynamic mobility between academia, industry, and society, fostering a hybrid approach to education, research, and innovation. Even teaching-focused institutions actively apply research methodologies in real-world contexts, ensuring their programmes remain relevant to industry needs. **Encouraging professional mobility between universities and business enhances the reciprocal transfer of knowledge and drives open innovation.** Industry experts bring practical insights into academia, enriching research and teaching methods, while academics who immerse themselves in business environments gain first-hand experience to address industry challenges. This bidirectional exchange strengthens collaboration, ensures skills relevance, and fosters continuous innovation across both sectors.

However, more dedicated financial resources and support for scaling successful examples are needed to sustain and expand these partnerships effectively.

- EURASHE will help pilot partnerships that focus on **sectors with severe skills gaps**, leveraging the expertise of its members in university-business collaboration to design scalable solutions.

### 3.3. Roll-out of targeted EU Skills Academies, after a review of existing ones [2026]

Skills Academies and UAS both share the goals of responding to industry needs and fostering high-level skills. However, UAS have a wider role that includes research, innovation, and structured degree programmes, whereas Skills Academies focus more on rapid and targeted skills development in

priority sectors. Therefore, **UAS are well placed to contribute to the existing Skills Academies**. Furthermore, as partners in Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) and European Universities alliances, UAS can help bring together these three flagship initiatives.

- Through engaging in collecting feedback and input from its membership, EURASHE will support the integration and alignment of initiatives, such as EU Skills Academies, CoVEs, and European Universities alliances, to reduce fragmentation and create synergies.
- EURASHE will engage in the **expansion of EU Skills Academies** by sharing good practices from its members and ensuring these academies deliver relevant skills for emerging industries.

## 4. Strand C: Circulate and allocate skills to unlock the full potential of the single market

### 4.1. European Universities Initiative

EURASHE welcomes the development of a sustainable investment pathway for European Universities alliances to enable long-term cooperation, resource pooling, and strengthen partnerships with businesses, regions, and innovation ecosystems. **We advocate for inclusive access to funding instruments for all types of alliances**, irrespective of their Erasmus+ funding status, and including those that hold a Seal of Excellence.

A key opportunity within the initiative is the development of joint and collaborative European degrees, building on the European Approach to Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. These efforts can also contribute to skills development for European value chains, reinforcing the role of alliances in strengthening ties between higher education and enterprise. Beyond education, **alliances should receive more support for research, innovation, and regional development**.

Regarding the legal status of alliances, we see the value in exploring flexible EU-level instruments that can support transnational cooperation, while taking into account national specificities, funding rules, and legal frameworks.

- EURASHE will contribute to the ongoing dialogue on legal and funding pathways to further develop the European Universities Initiative, notably through its **Sounding Board**, whose members are all involved in alliances.

- EURASHE will help to **scale up innovative good practices** in transnational cooperation by linking the Erasmus+ funded alliances to the broader community of applied science universities.
- We support the alliances with an applied focus to become **international talent hubs**, attracting the skills and workforce Europe needs for the fifth industrial revolution.

#### 4.2. Innovative joint European study programmes and the European Degree

Transnational work-based learning is growing in UAS, driven by the European Universities Initiative and participation in CoVEs. In addition, UAS have welcomed the concept and added value of the European Degree. Regardless of the final design or infrastructure of the European Degree, **we see clear added value in fostering pan-European, practice-oriented joint study programmes**—particularly those aligned with regional priorities and labour market needs.

Some EURASHE members, already involved in European Universities alliances, are pioneering joint study programs that combine academic rigor with practical, industry-relevant training. The European Degree could further contribute to boosting mobility and integration in higher education, skills circulation, and talent attraction, positioning applied-sciences alliances in the nexus of developing high-skilled graduates in strategic fields.

- EURASHE will serve as a bridging actor between the outcomes of pilot European Degree and European label projects and the future of this format with the broader Applied Science University Community.
- We will engage with the **European Degree policy lab** to cater to the sectoral recommendations in the development process.
- Alliances, such as EU4Dual, could pilot work-based European degrees strengthening skills ecosystems and developing highly skilled transnational work-ready graduates within the single market.

#### 4.3. Facilitating portability of skills and qualifications

Much underutilised talent can be capitalised by enabling recognition of skills and cross-border qualifications, as well as cross-educational systems.

As recognition varies significantly across Europe, **EURASHE supports efforts to bridge recognition gaps**, particularly in transitions from initial to higher and technical VET. With members spanning 35

countries, we bring first-hand experience in addressing these challenges and can contribute to tailored policy recommendations.

Mutually acceptable quality principles are crucial for fostering interinstitutional trust, creating synergies between educational levels and ensuring high-quality standards across systems. For example, Ireland is currently working on a shared quality assurance review process between higher education and VET, including cross-sectoral publications on system quality. This model could be adopted by other Member States to expand their national higher education quality assurance frameworks to include post-secondary technical VET (levels 5 and 6), streamlining practices based on mutually accepted quality principles and integrating VET and higher education into a broader lifelong learning approach.

EURASHE has played a key role in the Bologna Process, shaping recognition tools that ensure a strong, quality-assured, and trusted system for recognition of higher education qualifications and study mobilities. Within the European Higher Education Area, current efforts are solely focused on the automatic recognition of full degrees. However EURASHE sees strong potential in expanding recognition of shorter learning periods and diverse learning paths, particularly for applied higher education and lifelong learning trajectories. Achieving this requires closer collaboration between national recognition centres, universities and countries to share good practices and strengthen trust in the recognition system.

#### 4.3.3. European formats for interoperable digital credentials [2027]

To enhance the portability of qualifications and expand the use of micro-credentials, **EURASHE supports European formats for interoperable digital credentials**. These should respect national regulations while leveraging existing tools to foster broader acceptance of skills and qualifications. This approach will strengthen skills-based education and training, ensuring skills are recognised, further developed by education providers, and activated by the labor market. EURASHE will work within the framework of the Bologna Process to ensure its tools are adapted to the challenges, including those outlined in the Union of Skills.

- EURASHE will help to **leverage existing tools**, such as qualification frameworks, recognition and quality assurance mechanisms, **to help integrate tertiary education systems** and increase the flexibility of learning pathways.

#### 4.3.4. Strengthening transnational cooperation under CoVEs

CoVEs play a crucial role in skills development by fostering cooperation among industries, VET, higher education, and research and innovation. Through shared infrastructure, they support up-to-date

skills development, work-based learning, and practice-based innovation and research, while also optimising resources and reducing budgetary pressures.

**Leveraging the CoVE model within the European Universities Initiative could create stronger connections** between applied education, research, and regional development, ensuring that knowledge transfer and sectoral innovation flow effectively between local and European levels.

- Strengthening **synergies between CoVEs and innovation ecosystems** can be achieved through targeted funding instruments, dedicated calls under Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe, or policy incentives that encourage cross-collaboration.
- Supporting structured partnerships between CoVEs, European Universities alliances, and industry stakeholders could facilitate the co-design of transnational skills strategies, joint training programmes, and research-driven innovation in key economic sectors.

## 5. Strand D: Attract and retain skills from third countries to address skills shortages and develop top talent in Europe

### 5.1. Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action 'MSCA Choose Europe' pilot [Q4 2025]

While UAS host MCSA grant holders, the number is drastically lower than those of traditional universities. However, attracting global talent to Europe for applied research with industry could have an important impact on the sector, but more importantly in the regions where UAS are located.

EURASHE would like to see the 'MSCA Choose Europe' pilot to include a proportion of grants for subjects matching priorities of national and regional Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3). A combination of excellence and place-based approaches to talent attraction would ensure the MCSA contribute to closing the regional innovation gap—because all regions need new talent.

- EURASHE will **share evidence** for the design of the Choose Europe Pilot with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD).
- EURASHE will promote the pilot call among its members and monitor results.

### 5.2. New framework of research careers

Research management is a vital skill for successful and impactful research, but one which is currently not sufficiently recognised or supported by higher education systems. In helping to develop



a new era in research management as part of the European Research Area (ERA) policy agenda, UAS research managers have a role to play in sharing expertise on working with industry, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

- EURASHE will support the **development of a competence framework and European Charter for research managers**, as part of its role as a higher education stakeholder in the ERA Forum.

## 6. Investing in education and skills: mobilising public and private investment

### 6.1. Evaluating the quality and relevance of investment in education and training, supported by a Learning Lab

Investment in quality education yields significant societal benefits and is crucial for a competitive economy. However, achieving meaningful impact requires thoughtful, deliberate efforts and an understanding of how specific policies translate into desired outcomes.

While good practices exist at the national and regional levels across Member States, bringing experts together to exchange insights on the effectiveness of education investments, good practices and policy recommendations are essential. We must also find ways to scale these insights through EU initiatives to maximise their impact.

- EURASHE will collect and document good practices from different Member States, focusing on those that have demonstrated societal and economic benefits.
- Through its **Skills Community of Practice**, EURASHE will facilitate workshops and other fora that bring together education experts from various Member States to share insights on the effectiveness of education investments.

### 6.2. Encourage Member States to make appropriate use of the financing possibilities for education and training offered by the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)

The uptake of European funding varies significantly across Member States due to a range of factors, including procedural and bureaucratic complexities, as well as capacity constraints.

- EURASHE actively collaborates with its members to improve their ability to access European funding and manage their contributions effectively. Our aim is to ensure that available tools are tailored to the specific realities at national, regional, and local levels, optimising their impact.

## 7. Governance

### 7.1. Driving change—a European Skills High-Level Board

While progress has been made in education and training systems through various tools, networks, platforms, and funding mechanisms, synergies between these systems are still lacking. Today, due to technological change, adults need continuous upskilling and reskilling. Education, training, and employment are interconnected, reinforcing one another. Yet, too often, we treat them as separate policy areas, lacking coordination and missing crucial links. Stakeholders across sectors, including education providers, higher education institutions, public employment services, and national authorities, often operate in isolation. However, from a lifelong learning perspective, education and training contribute not only to employment opportunities but also to well-being, health, and civic engagement.

To address this, we strongly support the creation of a **new steering mechanism: the European Skills High-Level Board** with a dynamic composition and representation from the applied sciences. Establishing this platform for multi-stakeholder and multi-sector interaction would finally provide the space for a comprehensive dialogue on skills.

At the same time, we advocate for streamlining education policies, especially between Directorates-General, and welcome the collaboration between the Directorates-General for Education, Youth, Sports and Culture (DG EAC) and for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) under the new role of European Commission Executive Vice-President. This approach fosters better alignment and cooperation across different sectors, improving the overall effectiveness of skills initiatives in Europe.

- UAS have valuable experience in working with local authorities and businesses. Their expertise could contribute significantly to a multi-stakeholder dialogue at the European level, ensuring a more integrated and effective approach to skills development.

## 7.2. Towards a dedicated EU 27 Recommendation on human capital: education and skills in the European Semester

Leveraging European-level expertise – through country reports and country-specific recommendations – is essential for ensuring coherence across the various systems that govern skills development. The European Semester is a highly valuable tool in bridging education, training, employment, and skills with economic and financial governance.

**We support the introduction of a horizontal EU-27 recommendation on human capital.** This will be a crucial tool for implementing the findings of the European Skills Intelligence Observatory, as well as the conclusions of the European Skills High-Level Board, guiding Member States to streamline reforms and legislative changes. It will facilitate better coordination, bridge gaps between policies, and provide clear guidelines for skills development in Europe.

## Summary Table: How EURASHE will help to implement the Union of Skills

Union of Skills Deliverable	Why UAS are relevant	EURASHE actions
<b>STRAND A: Building Skills for quality lives and jobs</b>		
<b>European competence framework for academic staff (2026)</b>	<p>Competences required by UAS staff are similar to those at all HEIs, but there is a greater focus on applying knowledge and engaging with partners from the world of work. The experience of UAS staff can help to strengthen the competence framework in these areas, benefiting all types of academics that are increasingly asked to fulfil more diverse roles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EURASHE will <b>cooperate closely with the European Commission's team developing the framework</b>, articulating the experiences of its members (an associate member of interest is Hochschullehrerbund, the professional association of UAS staff in Germany).</li> </ul>
<b>European strategy for VET (2026)</b>	<p>EURASHE agrees with the likes of CEDEFOP and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that VET should be conceived broadly, representing a mode of learning and teaching rather than a specific level. We believe that this perspective could be the basis for the forthcoming VET strategy, covering all EQF levels. UAS are uniquely positioned to link levels and modes of education and training, providing companies with highly skilled and work ready graduates, while offering students flexible learning pathways between what has traditionally been viewed as VET and higher education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EURASHE would like to <b>be part of a VET reflection group</b> that brings together stakeholders in education training with international expertise, such as that of CEDEFOP, the European Training Foundation, European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), and the OECD. This could lead to bold and fresh ideas, such as how integrated tertiary</li> </ul>

		education systems can better serve both learners and labour market requirements.
<b>Increasing accessibility of higher education (2027)</b>	UAS increase both the social and territorial cohesion of higher education systems. They provide opportunities for students that may not usually enter higher education, including first in the family, immigrants and adult learners. In some countries UAS are far more numerous than traditional universities and are located in all types of regions. In addition to online and blended learning, these characteristics make UAS strategic partners to increase access to higher education and spread its benefits widely, including civic engagement and skills development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EURASHE will <b>actively engage in the Bologna Follow-Up Group's (BFUG) Thematic Peer Group D</b> focused on implementing the principle and guidelines on the social dimension.</li> <li>• EURASHE will share widely the results of the Erasmus+ project <b>EngageAll</b>.</li> <li>• EURASHE will respond to informal and formal consultation requests from the European Commission.</li> </ul>
<b>STEM strategy (Q1 2025)</b>	UAS are key players in providing STEM qualifications, education, and training, particularly in fields critical for the green and digital transitions. They equip students with advanced STEM skills essential for the future of work, including through professional doctorates. Leveraging their expertise, knowledge, and capabilities, UAS can play a key role in: (a) developing a comprehensive STEM competence framework; (b) advancing the establishment of joint transnational programs for engineers; (c) expanding micro-credentials, and (d) deploying STEM bootcamps. Additionally, UAS will support the creation of STEM Skills Foundries and mentorship programmes for student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EURASHE will support the deployment of the STEM Strategy by providing input based on the experiences of its members.</li> <li>• EURASHE will consult members about the proposed <b>European Degree for engineers</b>, deployment of joint transnational programs and micro-credentials in STEM, STEM bootcamps and Skills Foundries. Through leveraging our network, we aim to bring together</li> </ul>



	entrepreneurs, fostering innovation and bridging the gap between education and industry.	academic experts, industry leaders, and professionals to deliver cutting-edge training on relevant skills.
<b>STRAND B: Upskill and reskill to ensure future-orientated skills</b>		
<b>Roll-out of targeted EU Skills Academies (2026)</b>	The objectives and contribution of Skills Academies are similar to those of UAS, in that they respond quickly to industry needs by developing high-level skills. They are therefore well-placed to contribute to the existing Skills Academies. Furthermore, as partners in CoVEs and European Universities alliances, UAS can help bring together the three different flagship initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through engaging in collecting feedback and input from its membership, EURASHE will <b>support the integration and alignment of initiatives</b>, such as EU Skills Academies, CoVEs, and European Universities alliances, to reduce fragmentation and create synergies.</li> <li>• EURASHE will engage in the expansion of <b>European Skills Academies</b> by sharing good practices from its members and ensuring these academies deliver relevant skills for emerging industries.</li> </ul>
<b>Pilot transnational university-business partnerships for sectors with severe skills gaps (2026)</b>	UAS have long-established successful partnerships with businesses, ensuring that education aligns with the skills industries need for the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EURASHE will <b>help pilot partnerships</b> that focus on <b>sectors with severe skills gaps</b>, leveraging the expertise of its members in university-business collaboration to design scalable solutions.</li> </ul>

STRAND C: Circulate and allocate skills to unlock the full potential of the single market		
<p><b>Skills portability Initiative (2026) and Common European framework for the automatic recognition of study qualifications and learning periods abroad in school, VET and HE (2027)</b></p>	<p>Within the European Higher Education Area, current efforts are solely focused on the automatic recognition of full degrees. EURASHE sees strong potential in fostering active participation and exchange of practices between ENICs (European Network of Information Centres) and NARICs (National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union), higher education institutions and countries, to strengthen the recognition of full-degree qualifications while also shortening learning periods and diverse learning paths. This is particularly relevant for applied higher education and lifelong learning trajectories.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EURASHE will work within the framework of the Bologna Process to ensure its tools are adapted to the challenges, including those outlined in the Union of Skills.</li> <li>• EURASHE will work towards the goal of using existing tools, such as qualification frameworks, recognition and quality assurance, to help <b>integrate tertiary education systems</b> and increase the flexibility of learning pathways.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Launch of innovative joint European study programmes with a European degree/label (2026)</b></p>	<p>Transnational work-based learning is growing in UAS, thanks to the European Universities initiative and participation in CoVEs. In addition, UAS have welcomed the concept and added value of the European Degree.</p> <p>Regardless of the final design or infrastructure of the European Degree, we see clear added value in fostering pan-European, practice-oriented joint study programmes—particularly those aligned with regional priorities and labour market needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EURASHE will serve as a bridging actor between the outcomes of pilot European Degree and European label projects and the future of this format with the broader Applied Science University Community.</li> <li>• We will engage with the <b>European Degree policy lab</b> to cater to the sectoral recommendations in the development process.</li> </ul>

<p><b>A legal status for European Universities Alliances (2026)</b></p>	<p>EURASHE welcomes the development of a sustainable investment pathway for European Universities alliances to enable long-term cooperation, resource pooling, and strengthened partnerships with businesses, regions, and innovation ecosystems. We advocate for inclusive access to funding instruments for all alliances, regardless of their current Erasmus+ funding status (including for example those that received the Seal of Excellence).</p> <p>Regarding the legal status of alliances, we see the value in exploring flexible EU-level instruments that can support transnational cooperation, while taking into account national specificities, funding rules, and legal frameworks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EURASHE will contribute to the ongoing dialogue by discussing the legal and funding pathways to further develop the European Universities Initiative, notably through its <a href="#">Sounding Board</a>, whose members are all involved in alliances.</li> <li>• EURASHE will help to <b>scale up innovative good practices</b> in transnational cooperation by linking the Erasmus+ funded alliances to the broader community of applied science universities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>STRAND D: Attract and retain skills from third countries to address skills shortages and develop top talent in Europe</b></p>		
<p><b>Marie Sklodowska-Curie action 'MSCA Choose Europe' pilot (2025)</b></p>	<p>Although UAS host MCSA grantees, the number is proportionally much lower than those of traditional universities. However, attracting global talent for applied research with industry could have a massive impact on the sector, and more importantly in the regions where UAS are located. EURASHE calls for the MSCA Choose Europe pilot to include a proportion of grants for subjects matching priorities of national and regional Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3). A combination of excellence and place-based approaches to talent attraction would ensure the MCSA contributes to closing the regional innovation gap, because all regions need new talent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EURASHE will share evidence for the design of the Choose Europe Pilot with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD).</li> <li>• EURASHE will promote the pilot call among its members and monitor results.</li> </ul>

## About EURASHE

EURASHE is the European Association for the Applied Sciences in Higher Education, the leading voice for applied sciences and professional higher education in Europe. With over 70 members based in Europe and beyond, EURASHE advocates for the interests of more than 500 applied higher education institutions. Founded in 1990, EURASHE has a mission to promote the value of applied higher education at both national and European levels. It is committed to fostering international cooperation and enhancing the global engagement of its member institutions. Through these efforts, EURASHE contributes to the advancement of higher education and research, and in particular its role in meeting societal and economic challenges. For more information, visit [www.eurashe.eu](http://www.eurashe.eu)